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**And *This* Relationship is *Just* Right:
Normative Romantic Relationship Development**

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**And *This* Relationship is *Just* Right:
Normative Romantic Relationship Development**

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Dissertation

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**And *This* Relationship is *Just* Right:
Normative Romantic Relationship Development**

Elizabeth Rose Keneski, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Paul Eastwick

The current five studies address an unanswered question in the romantic relationships literature: what do couples' friends and family members observe about couples' romances that brings those network members to (dis)approve of those relationships? I hypothesized that the extent to which couples follow an average, or normative, relationship trajectory—a just right, 'Goldilocks' relationship progression—increases network member relationship approval and support and, ultimately, influences couples' relationship quality and outcomes. In Study 1, newlyweds generated a timeline of significant courtship events by indicating when each event occurred in their histories together. Spouses whose courtship timelines progressed in a more normative sequence reported greater marital satisfaction, and this association was mediated by more positive perceived relationships with friends and family members. In Studies 2a-c, and 3a, participants exhibited greater approval for a friend's relationship to the degree that that relationship was perceived to have developed normatively. In Studies 3a and 3b, the associations between perceived normative relationship development, perceived network relationship approval, and relationship quality were replicated in engaged, recently-

married, and long-married couples. Further, additional analyses suggest that social network relationship approval and support mediate the link between normative relationship development and subsequent relationship quality. In Studies 4a-b, the effect of normative relationship development on concurrent relationship quality was not replicated in dating couples, indicating that it may be too early in couples' relationships to experience the benefits of normativity. Finally, Studies 5b and 5c (based on a qualitative pilot study—Study 5a) tested whether experiencing a more normative relationship development in fledgling relationships was associated with relationship quality, romantic interest, and relationship dissolution. Relationship normativity predicted higher peak romantic interest in both long-term and short-term relationships in Studies 5b, and higher average romantic interest and peak romantic interest, but only in long-term relationships, in Study 5c. There were no differences in deviations from a normative relationship progression, for short-term or long-term relationships, in whether or not those relationships had ended or were ongoing. Across studies, more normative relationship progressions were generally associated with greater relationship approval and support from couples' social networks, and more average, 'Goldilocks' relationships thrived.

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And This Relationship Is Just Right:

Normative Romantic Relationship Development Predicts

Relationship Quality through Social Network Approval

The embedded nature of couples within their social milieus fosters a relationship context in which intimates' social network members interact with, form perceptions about, and influence individuals' romantic relationships. Both (a) how couple members perceive family members' and friends' opinions of couples' romantic relationships as well as (b) what social network members report feeling towards a given relationship influence couple members' relationship evaluations and relationship outcomes (for reviews, see Parks, 2009; Sinclair & Wright, 2009). Specifically, couple members ascertain how loved ones feel about their relationships via the behavioral support (or lack thereof) that network members demonstrate toward couples' relationships (Keneski & Loving, 2014). This behavior, and couple members' assessments of network members' support, subsequently influence romantic relationship quality and outcomes. In other words, what network members observe about how loved ones' relationships are going and the opinions network members form and demonstrate towards those relationships affect the relationships themselves (Berger, 1979; Surra & Milardo, 1991).

Despite the clear link between network perceptions and relationship outcomes, exactly what occurs in a given romantic relationship (and when it occurs) that signals to couple members and network members that a relationship is going well has remain largely unstudied. One factor that has been surprisingly overlooked is the role social norms might play in romantic relationship development and outcomes. Specifically, individuals are socialized that relationships develop in a prescribed, normative way. Nursery rhymes teach even young children to recognize that "first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes

the baby in the baby carriage.” A number of similar social norms prescribe how relationships should progress with the important implication that the norm is best—normative relationship progression will result in a happy, healthy relationship (Holmberg & MacKenzie, 2002; see also Etcheverry, 2009 for relationship beliefs). Given the norm-enforcement role typically played by individuals’ friends and family members across other life domains (e.g., following rules in school, becoming and remaining employed; cf. Feldman, 1984), I suspected couples’ network members would support or not support a given relationship as a function of the extent to which the relationship “follows the norm.”

This series of studies explores whether the extent to which couples’ relationships adhere to the course of an *average* relationship influences subsequent relationship quality and longevity. In addition, the current studies fill a gap in the literature regarding how social scripts for what constitute *normative* relationship development influence relationship outcomes—I propose that this influence occurs through the transmission of network members’ (dis)approval and support (or lack thereof) for a couple’s relationship. Below, I outline how normative scripts for the order in which relationship events occur function as a baseline by which network members appraise couples’ relationships and, subsequently, influence those relationships.

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT NORMS—THE ‘GOLDILOCKS’ RELATIONSHIP

Just as in the fairytale of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (Southerly, 1839) in which Goldilocks finds the porridge that is ‘just right’ after trying porridge that is too hot and porridge that is too cold, nature favors averageness. Being more average yields the best outcomes across a variety of phenomena. This generalized averageness bias in nature is known as the *Goldilocks Principle*. For example, the Earth is referred to as a “Goldilocks planet” because its distance from the sun is neither too far nor too close—Earth’s

atmosphere is uniquely conducive to being able to sustain life (Overbye, 2011). In genetics, possessing the average genotype for a given trait (one recessive and one dominant allele) results in higher relative fitness than does having two dominant or two recessive alleles (Allison, 1954). In human biology, specific proteins (e.g., antithrombotic proteins and prothrombotic proteins in blood; Selwyn, 2003) and neurotransmitters (e.g. dopamine; Stoeckel, 2010) in our bodies must be maintained in perfect balance in order to avoid the harmful and potentially fatal consequences caused by producing too few or too many. Finally, in mate attraction research, composite or computer-‘averaged’ photographs are rated as most attractive in comparison to ratings of any of the individual faces that comprise the composites (Langlois & Roggman, 1990).

Such findings across disciplines demonstrate the ubiquity of the *Goldilocks Principle* across a wide range of phenomena. But is there a ‘Goldilocks relationship’ — or an average relationship progression that is ‘just right’ when it comes to predicting later relationship success? Preliminary evidence suggests there might be. Specifically, both particularly accelerated and especially prolonged courtships forecast lower relationship quality and higher divorce rates (Huston, 1994; Huston, Niehuis, & Smith, 2001). Further, recent analyses of data from the National Survey of Family Growth provide support for a ‘Goldilocks’ age for marriage in the U.S.; marrying at too early an age—in the early 20s, or too late an age—in the late 30s or later, are both associated with greater risk of divorce (Wolfinger, 2015). In the present work, I significantly extend this initial work by testing whether the order of occurrence of important relationship events signals to couples and their social network members whether couples’ romances are ‘on track’ for success based on scripts for typical relationship progressions.

Relationship scripts, or cognitive representations of the type and order of events that people envision happening in ‘normal’ relationships, have a culturally pervasive

influence on how people view what ‘should’ go on (Holmberg & MacKenzie, 2002). For example, both males and females, and both those who do and do not have much dating experience, exhibit high levels of agreement regarding what events define relationship development as well as the sequence in which those events occur (e.g., first meet, first date, first kiss, etc.; Holmberg & MacKenzie, 2002). Importantly, individuals draw on their schemas and social comparisons to organize and evaluate relationship perceptions and facilitate correspondent behaviors (e.g., Karney, McNulty, & Bradbury, 2004). Specifically, individuals feel more or less satisfied in their relationships and, ultimately, make relationship decisions based on how their relationships compare to the standard of how they see others’ relationships unfolding (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000).

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT NORM ENFORCEMENT

Romantic relationships are embedded within a number of outside social influences, including partners’ respective social networks of friends and family members and those close others’ opinions, or cognitive appraisals, about couples’ relationships (e.g., Sprecher, 2011). Couple members’ impressions of network relationship approval and relationship support (behavioral demonstrations of network members’ cognitive appraisals) are linked with a variety of relationship outcomes, including desire to initiate a relationship (Wright & Sinclair, 2012), relationship quality, relationship commitment, and relationship fate (e.g., Bryant & Conger, 1999; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Felmlee, 2001; Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990; Parks & Adelman, 1983; Parks, Stan, & Eggert, 1983; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). Additionally, perceived network *disapproval* predicts negative relationship outcomes, including relationship dissolution (Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990). Further, network members’ actual perceptions of couple members’ relationships are closely tied to couples’ relationship quality and relationship fate (e.g., Agnew, Loving, &

Drigotas, 2001; Etcheverry, Le, & Charania, 2008; Felmlee, 2001; Loving, 2006; MacDonald & Ross, 1999), and network members believe they have the power to influence the relationships of their loved ones (Sprecher, 2011). Thus, through observing couples' relationships, social network members ascertain opinions about the quality of those relationships, relay their opinions to couple members through behaviors towards the relationships, and, subsequently, can affect couples' relationship outcomes (outlined in the S-NET Model; Keneski & Loving, 2014). But *what* exactly do network members observe about loved ones' relationships that inform their opinions, and *why* do those opinions matter so much for relationship outcomes?

I propose that relationship norms serve as a guiding framework by which relationship observations are made and how those observations are then evaluated by social network members. Both relationship partners and relationship observers (i.e., social network members) take note of how relationships are developing and compare those observations to socially dictated relationship scripts. The outcome of these comparisons contributes to relationship perceptions and, thus, relationship appraisals (i.e., network members' levels of relationship approval, couple members' levels of relationship satisfaction). Therefore, the importance of perceptions of social network approval and support for relationship quality and outcomes may reflect individuals' perceived confirmation of their relationship following societal norms and scripts for what constitutes normative relationship development. Indeed, participants spontaneously mention relationship comparisons as reasons for positive and negative turning points in their relationships (Surra, 1987). Couple members' perceptions of social network approval and support may reflect couple members' perceived confirmation that their relationships are on the 'right track'—that track being determined by relationship norms.

As the most proximal observers of friends' and family members' relationships, network members are well positioned to evaluate whether a loved one's romantic relationship adheres to or deviates from relationship development scripts and norms.¹ Friends and family members also have a vested interest in their loved ones' happiness and in the success of their intimate relationships. Further, norm enforcement—the process by which individuals provide feedback to others as to whether or not their behavior is normative with the goal of encouraging norm adherence and group conformity (cf. Feldman, 1984)—is more likely to occur when there is high interdependence (such as is the case with close friends and family members; Horne, 2007). Network members should therefore be highly motivated to encourage daters to follow social norms for relationships that they believe will result in thriving relationships. Indeed, couples in marginalized, less normative relationships (e.g., gay and lesbian relationships, interracial relationships, relationships in which couple members have a large age gap) perceive less societal and less network approval for their relationships (see Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006). Similarly, I propose that friends and family are more likely to react positively to a relationship that seems 'typical,' or that does not deviate too far from culturally-typical trajectories and scripts.

Once social network perceptions of relationship (dis)approval are formed, those opinions are transmitted through network members' relationship-specific behavioral

¹ It should be noted that I am focusing on Western, largely American, relationship norms and scripts in this series of studies. In considering these processes globally, it is likely that culturally-specific relationship development norms, rather than universal norms, influence individuals' romantic relationships. Thus, it will be important for future research to test the extent to which societal (e.g., Western cultures) versus local (e.g., church community) versus immediate social network (e.g., family) relationship development norms and norm enforcement most strongly affect relationship outcomes (see Future Directions). I argue, however, that the processes by which couples and network members observe couples' adherence to norms, develop relationship perceptions, and act on those perceptions (i.e., network members supporting a couple's relationship more or less) are the same regardless of what the cultural (or sub-cultural) norms are for relationship progression.

support, lack of support, or interference (Keneski & Loving, 2014). It is friends' and family members' behaviors towards a dater's partner and relationship that inform couple members of network members' level of support (e.g., telling your friend you (dis)like his/her partner, inviting the couple to your home, hugging the partner, not including the partner in party invitations). Network members may do so directly. For instance, if a friend relays a story of love-at-first-sight that was followed by an engagement only a few weeks later, many people would question the friend about the viability of the relationship. Likewise, a mother may nudge her son who has been in a relationship for ten years to "pop the question already!" Alternatively, network members may transmit relationship (dis)approval indirectly by simply not saying much or anything about a loved one's partner or relationship. In both cases, couple members should perceive less social network relationship support and approval for their relationships, thus affecting their own relationship quality. Thus, perceived social network approval and support—which at least, in part, may reflect perceived adherence to scripts governing relationships—could be the reasons why a 'Goldilocks relationship' is '*just* right'.

CURRENT STUDIES

The following set of studies tests these hypotheses (see Table 1). In Study 1, newlywed couples generated a timeline of significant courtship events by indicating when each event occurred in their histories together. Couples' courtship timelines were compared to the sample average in order to test whether the extent to which their relationships progressed in a more normative, or average, sequence was associated with greater marital satisfaction. Further, perceived relationship quality with friends and family members was tested as a mediator for the hypothesized association between relationship sequence and relationship quality. To test how pervasive the norms for relationship development scripts

might be, in Studies 2a-c participants were presented with common courtship events in random order and asked to re-order them to reflect a “typical” relationship progression. Additionally, in Studies 2a-c and 3a, participants reported their approval for a friend’s dating relationship as well as their perceptions of the extent to which the relationship was developing normatively. This method provides a relatively direct test of the association between social network observations of normative (or non-normative) relationship progressions and relationship approval. In Study 2c, an alternative explanation for this effect was tested—that network members want their loved ones to be average across many traits and not just average in their relationships.

In Studies 3a-b and 4a-b, the hypothesized associations between *perceived* normative relationship development, *perceived* network relationship approval, and relationship quality were tested in dating, engaged, recently-married, and long-married couples. Further, in Studies 2a-3b, social network relationship approval and support were tested as possible mechanisms by which normative relationship development influences subsequent relationship quality. Finally, Studies 5b and 5c (which were based on the previous studies, and a qualitative pilot study) tested whether experiencing a more normative relationship development early on in fledgling relationships was associated with relationship quality and two additional outcomes: romantic interest and relationship dissolution.

Table 1*Overview of Current Studies*

	Sample	Replication?	Hypotheses Tested
Study 1	171 Newlywed Couples	-	Rel Norm > Rel Quality Rel Norm > Per SN Rel Approval Rel Norm > Per SN Rel Approval > Rel Quality
Study 2a	40 Undergrads	-	Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Approval Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Support Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Approval > Per Rel Quality Rel Norm > SN Rel Support > Per Rel Quality Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Approval > SN Rel Approval > Per Rel Quality
Study 2b	234 MTurkers	✓ Direct in different sample	Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Approval Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Support Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Approval > Per Rel Quality Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Support > Per Rel Quality Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Approval > SN Rel Support > Per Rel Quality
Study 2c	376 Undergrads	✓ Direct	Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Approval Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Support Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Approval > Per Rel Quality Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Support > Per Rel Quality Per Rel Norm > SN Rel Approval > SN Rel Support > Per Rel Quality
Study 3a	330 Married 67 Unmarried	✓ Conceptual in different samples	Per Rel Norm > Rel Quality Per Rel Norm > Per SN Approval Per Rel Norm > Per SN Approval > Rel Quality Per Rel Norm > Per Rel Quality Per Rel Norm > SN Approval Per Rel Norm > SN Approval > Per Rel Quality

Table 1 Cont.

Study 3b	215 Engaged 177 Married	✓ Conceptual in different samples	Per Rel Norm > Rel Quality Per Rel Norm > Per SN Approval Per Rel Norm > Per SN Approval > Rel Quality
Study 4a	291 MTurkers	✓ Conceptual in different sample	Rel Norm > Rel Quality Rel Norm > Per SN Approval Rel Norm > Per SN Support
Study 4b	215 Undergrads	✓ Direct in different sample	Rel Norm > Per SN Approval > Rel Quality Rel Norm > Per SN Support > Rel Quality Rel Norm > Per SN Approval > Per SN Support > Rel Quality
Study 5a	41 Undergrads	-	N/A (Qualitative pilot study)
Study 5b	87 Undergrads	✓ Conceptual	In two types of relationships: Rel Norm > Rel Quality
Study 5c	185 MTurkers	✓ Direct	Rel Norm > Romantic Interest Rel Norm > Rel Outcome

Notes. Rel = relationship. Norm = normativity. Per = perceived. SN = social network.

Methods & Results

STUDY 1

Method

Data for Study 1 was drawn from a larger, longitudinal study of marriage in order to establish whether a more normative relationship progression is associated with better subsequent relationship quality. A relatively objective measure of relationship development—the occurrence of major relationship events by date, agreed upon by both relationship members—was employed in order to delineate a ‘normative’ relationship progression. Assessments of couple members’ perceived relationship quality with social network members were also collected to test whether the extent to which couples reported a more or less normative relationship development affected their perceived network relationship approval.

Participants

Newlywed couples were recruited as part of a larger longitudinal study on marital development. Advertisements targeting “engaged” or “recently married” individuals in the Austin area were posted in local wedding-planning publications and on their accompanying websites, in newspapers, on Facebook, and on announcement boards around local campuses and churches. Additional participant referrals were made to the study by wedding venue coordinators and pre-marital counselors. All interested couples were screened over the telephone by the author to ensure a) they were legally marrying within 6-months of their potential start date in the study, b) it was the first marriage for both partners, c) neither partner had any children before beginning participation in the study, d) they had no immediate plans to move from the greater Austin area, e) both partners spoke English

proficiently, and f) both partners had completed at least the 10th grade (the two latter requirements to ensure questionnaire comprehension). The final sample consisted of 171 couples.

Husbands were an average of 29.13 ($SD = 5.33$) years old, and wives were an average of 27.24 ($SD = 4.93$) years old. Both husbands and wives reported having completed approximately 16 years of education, on average, or equivalent to four years in college. Seventy-seven percent of husbands and 68% of wives were employed full time. Fourteen percent of both husbands and wives were full time students. Forty-eight percent of husbands and 45% of wives reported being Christian. Seventy-seven percent of husbands and 75% of wives indicated their race was White. The combined median income of couples was between \$60,000 and \$65,000 per year.

Procedures and materials

Newlywed spouses completed a series of questionnaires individually and then attended a lab session in which they completed a series of tasks together, including the creation of a timeline of their dating history together.²

Marital satisfaction. Spouses completed an adapted version of the Couples Satisfaction Index to assess overall satisfaction with their marriages (CSI, 16-item version; Funk & Rogge, 2007; see Appendix B). As a part of this measure, spouses reported on the general state of their marriages (e.g., “Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your marriage;” rated from 1 = “extremely unhappy” to 7 = “extremely happy”) in addition to satisfaction with specific aspects of their relationships (e.g., “I really feel like part of a team with my partner;” rated from 1 = “not at all true” to 7 = “completely true”). Participants then rated a series of opposing adjectives at varying levels of

² For a list of all other measures collected in this study, please see Appendix A.

descriptiveness of their marriages (e.g., 1 = “discouraging” to 7 = “hopeful”). The composite score on the scale had a possible range of 16 to 111, with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction. Reliability was high for both husbands ($\alpha = .95$) and wives ($\alpha = .94$).

Perceived social network relationship support. Spouses indicated the number of people they could turn to, other than their partners, for support in times of need as well as how satisfied they were with that available network support. Perceived *quantity* of available social network support was assessed with 4 items (e.g., “If you were to have a marital difficulty or personal problem, how many people do you know, other than your spouse, who you would you feel comfortable talking to about your problem?,” 0 = “No one” to 5 = “5 or more”). Perceived *quality* of available social network support was assessed with 4 follow-up items that each read, “How satisfied are you with this?” (1 = “dissatisfied” to 7 = “satisfied”; see Appendix C).³ An average score for the quality of support subscale was calculated as a measure of perceived relationship quality with network members ($\alpha = .83$ for husbands; $\alpha = .84$ for wives).

Are network members a marital problem? Two items from the Marital Problems Inventory (MPI; Geiss & O’Leary, 1981) were used to assess whether couples’ social network members—“friends” and “in-laws, parents, relatives”—were a source of marital disagreement for the couple (rated from 1 = “not a problem at all” to 11 = “major problem”; see Appendix D). An average score of these two items was calculated as a measure of the extent to which network members were a source of marital disagreement for the couple.

Timeline of relationship events. After providing consent in the lab, couples were asked to recall their dating histories together and report the approximate dates on which

³ Size of the available network and satisfaction with the availability of the network were moderately correlated ($r = .59, p < .001$ for husbands and $r = .62, p < .01$ for wives).

important relationship events had occurred (e.g., first kiss, first intercourse, first saying “I love you,” meeting one another’s friends and parents; see Appendix E)⁴. Couples were then instructed to use the dates they had generated to create a timeline of when relationship events had occurred across their dating histories, from first meeting to getting married (see Appendix F for timeline; see Appendix G for research assistant instructions to participants)⁵.

Analytic strategy

Nine events from the list of dates that couples provided were selected based on their inclusion in previous social scripts research (i.e., first intercourse; e.g., Holmberg, & MacKenzie, 2002) and social network and relationships research (i.e., meeting one another’s friends and parents; e.g., Sinclair, & Wright, 2009). The dates provided by couples were used to code each event in the order it occurred in time (i.e., the event that happened first was coded as “1” and so on). Events that occurred on the same day were given a tied code (e.g., both coded as event “6”), and events that did not occur for a couple (e.g., she had never met his parents) were not given a code. The normative, mean sequence of each event was calculated by averaging the order in which the events occurred across the sample (see Table 2 and Figure 1). Then, similar to recent research in which sets of events are compared (Soller, 2014), each couple’s deviations from the average order of each event were computed and averaged (see Table 2) to create a (reversed) relationship normativity score. In order to create a measure of perceived network relationship support,

⁴ Couples were also given the opportunity to add significant relationship events that were not on the list provided to them.

⁵ This in-lab activity continued after the couples’ timelines were created with research assistants guiding couples to plot a graph of their “percent chance of marriage” across the time they had dated and to provide estimates of the time periods they had gone through different relationship stages (e.g., “seriously dating,” procedure adapted from Surra, 1985; see Appendices H and I). This data is not included, however, in the present analyses.

given that this precise construct was not collected in this study, couple members' scores on perceived social support satisfaction with friends and family members along with their reverse-coded score on the extent to which friends and family members were a marital problem for the couple were standardized and combined. Finally, relationship length was controlled for in all analyses given previous evidence for the benefits of a 'Goldilocks' relationship duration (e.g., Huston, 1994; Huston, Niehuis, & Smith, 2001).

Table 2

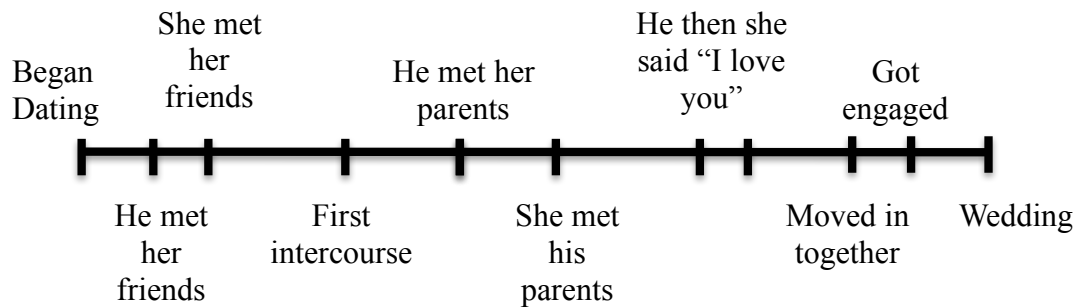
Study 1 Mean Order of and Deviations from Relationship Events

	<i>M (SD) <u>Order</u> of Events</i>	<i>M (SD) <u>Deviations</u> from Mean Order</i>
He met her friends	2.90 (1.69)	1.29 (1.09)
She met his friends	2.94 (2.03)	1.55 (1.31)
First intercourse	4.17 (2.35)	2.00 (1.23)
He met her parents	4.49 (2.09)	1.76 (1.11)
She met his parents	4.77 (2.19)	1.91 (1.06)
He said "I love you"	4.99 (1.52)	1.21 (.92)
She said "I love you"	5.02 (1.58)	1.25 (.96)
Move in together	7.63 (1.52)	1.18 (.96)
Engagement	7.86 (1.36)	.97 (.94)

Note. $N = 171$ married couples.

Figure 1

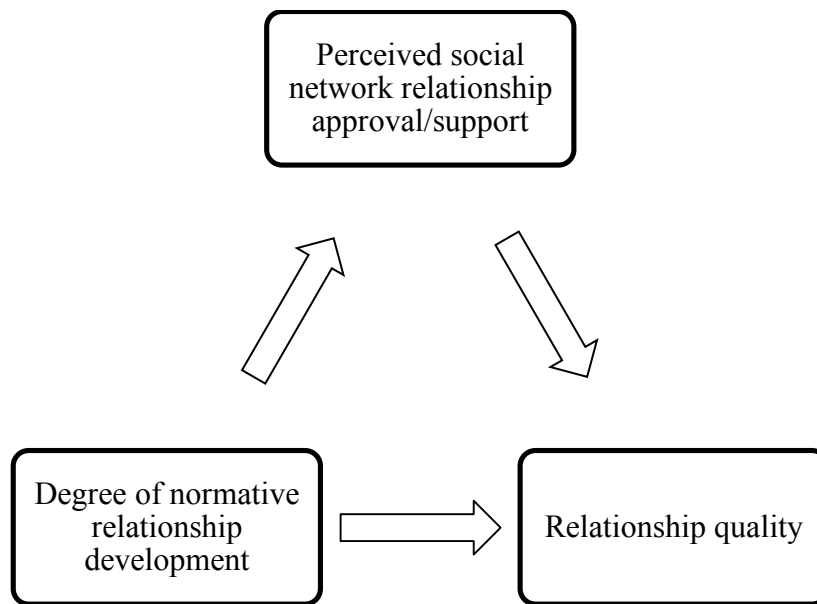
Study 1 Timeline of Mean Order of Relationship Events



Notes. $N = 171$ married couples. Not scaled in time.

Figure 2

Proposed Mediation Model Across Studies



Note. Proposed model for the mediation of perceived/actual social network relationship approval and relationship support on the effect of perceiving a more normative relationship development on subsequent relationship quality (i.e., satisfaction and/or commitment).

Results

Multilevel modeling (Mixed procedure in SPSS; spouses' reports nested within couples) revealed that couples whose overall courtship timelines were more average (i.e., a lower deviation score) reported greater marital satisfaction ($b = 2.68, SE = 1.18, t(337) = 2.28, p = .02$), controlling for relationship length prior to marriage ($b = -.001, SE = .001, t(337) = -1.38, p = .17$)⁶. Greater perceived social network relationship support was associated with greater marital satisfaction ($b = 5.27, SE = .78, t(337) = 6.74, p < .0001$), controlling for relationship length prior to marriage ($b = -.001, SE = .001, t(337) = -1.15, p = .25$). Further, when perceived social network relationship support was entered into a model with courtship normativity (see Figure 2), there was evidence that the effect of courtship normativity on couple members' perceived relationship support from friends and family members ($b = 5.10, SE = .80, t(336) = 6.38, p < .0001$) mediated the relationship between normative relationship development and subsequent relationship quality ($b_1 = 1.18, SE = 1.14, t(336) = 1.04, p = .30$), controlling for relationship length prior to marriage ($b = -.001, SE = .001, t(336) = -1.26, p = .21$)⁷.

Given the hierarchical nature of the data in this study (i.e., spouses' reports nested within couples, and couple-level timeline data), traditional tests of mediation (e.g., a Sobel test) provide inaccurate estimates of indirect effects (Hayes, 2013). Therefore, the procedures outlined by Bauer and colleagues (2006) were used to estimate the percent variance accounted for by the indirect effect described above (a 2-1-1 multilevel mediation analysis; e.g., Hayes, 2013). Using this procedure, approximately 57% of the variance in the effect of relationship normativity on marital satisfaction is accounted for by the indirect effect of courtship normativity through perceived social network relationship support.

⁶ Results did not differ when gender was included as a predictor in any of these models.

⁷ Results did not differ when relationship length was not included in any of these models.

Bootstrapped confidence intervals (Hayes, 2013) were also calculated to better evaluate the evidence that the role of perceived social network relationship support mediates the association between normative relationship development patterns and subsequent relationship quality. Bootstrapping was conducted because 1) it contributes to the ability to evaluate the presence of multilevel mediation in the absence of a significance test for mediation, and 2) it provides more accurate point estimates that are not dependent on a given sample—a key factor here in determining the effects of relationship normativity when normativity was calculated within a given sample. In the mediational model described above, 95% confidence intervals on 1000 bootstrap samples revealed that 0 was not included in the estimates for the effect of perceived social network relationship support ($b = 5.10, SE = 1.08, p = .001 [3.16, 7.35]$); however, 0 was included in the estimates for the effect of courtship normativity on subsequent marital satisfaction ($b = 1.18, SE = 1.33, p = .36 [-3.97, 1.27]$), controlling for the effect of relationship length before marriage ($b = -.0008, SE = .0006, p = .19 [-.002, .0005]$). In other words, there is robust evidence that relationship normativity influences subsequent relationship satisfaction through perceived social network relationship support.

Discussion

Overall, following a more normative⁸ sequence of relationship events was associated with greater subsequent relationship satisfaction. Further, there is preliminary support that relationships with social network members were more positive (couple members felt more satisfied with perceived social support, and network members were less of a source of marital disagreement) when couples had experienced more normative dating

⁸ It should be noted that the descriptor, “normative,” as used when detailing results from this study and subsequent studies in the remainder of the manuscript is contingent on the research samples. However, as the recruitment procedures reach field standards for obtaining as representative a sample as possible, the reported and proposed effects are inferred to be ‘normative’ beyond the sample-level.

relationship development patterns. Given that reports of marital satisfaction and perceived social network relationship support were all provided by couple members, however, it remains unclear whether friends and family members *actually* approve of and support more normative relationships to a greater extent than they do less normative relationships. These associations will be addressed in the next set of studies via reports from couples' social network members.

STUDIES 2A, 2B, AND 2C

Study 1 was designed to test whether normative relationship development is related to relationship quality in a relatively objective manner by having couples recall dates of relationship events together. Study 1 also provided initial support for the mechanistic role of social networks—couple members who recalled a more normative relationship development reported more positive relationships with their friends and family members once married. In Studies 2a-2c, I aimed to extend Study 1 results by testing whether network members themselves actually approve of and support relationship development patterns that they perceive to be more normative. Importantly, the hypothesized association between perceived relationship normativity and relationship approval and support is tested in a non-undergraduate sample in Study 2b. Finally, an alternative explanation for the proposed positive effect of perceived relationship normativity on friends' relationship opinions is tested in Study 2c—that individuals simply perceive their friends to be highly 'typical' or 'average' more generally. In other words, it is possible that the positive benefits of normative relationship development simply reflect a general bias towards 'averageness.' Determining whether individuals display greater approval towards their friends' more average personal traits or *only* towards their friends' more average relationships will tease apart the boundary conditions of the 'Goldilocks Principle'.

Method

Participants

In Study 2a, 40 undergraduates (85.0% female; 18 to 36 years old; $M_{age} = 21.50$, $SD_{age} = 3.11$) responded to an online survey for extra credit in a Human Development and Family Sciences course. The majority of these undergraduates reported being born in the U.S. (80.0%; $n = 32$), being exclusively heterosexual (i.e., attracted only to the opposite gender; 90.0%; $n = 36$), and being currently single (60.0%; $n = 24$). They represented diverse race/ethnicities (30.0% Asian/Asian American, $n = 12$; 27.5% Hispanic, $n = 11$; 25.0% White/Caucasian, $n = 10$; 12.5% African American/Black, $n = 5$; 5.0% “Other”, $n = 2.5\%$) and religious affiliations (27.5% “None”, $n = 11$; 27.5% “Other”, $n = 11$; 22.5% Catholic, $n = 9$; 20.0% Protestant, $n = 8$; 2.5% Muslim, $n = 1$).

In Study 2b, 234 participants (53.0% female; 18 to 80 years old, $M_{age} = 30.38$; $SD_{age} = 10.23$) were recruited via *Amazon.com*’s Mechanical Turk marketplace to respond to an online survey in exchange for \$1 (on par with payments for similar studies on the site). The majority of respondents reported being born in the U.S. (93.2%; $n = 218$), being White/Caucasian (78.6%, $n = 184$), being exclusively heterosexual (i.e., attracted only to the opposite gender; 90.0% of males, $n = 98$; 82.3% of women; $n = 102$), being married or seriously dating (60.7%; $n = 142$), and identified “None” when asked to report religious affiliation (53.4%; $n = 125$). They represented diverse education levels (33.8% 4-year college degree, $n = 79$; 32.5% some college, $n = 74$; 10.7% Master’s degree, $n = 25$; 9.4% high school/GED, $n = 22$; .9% doctoral degree, $n = 2$; .9% professional degree, $n = 2$; .4% less than high school; $n = 1$).

In Study 2c, 376 undergraduates from Introductory Psychology courses (66.2% female; 17 to 28 years old, $M_{age} = 18.66$; $SD_{age} = 1.10$) responded to an online survey in exchange for course credit. The majority of respondents reported being born in the U.S.

(90.1%; $n = 338$), and being heterosexual (92.8%; $n = 349$). They represented diverse race/ethnicities (18.5% Asian/Asian American, $n = 69$; 24.5% Hispanic, $n = 91$; 5.4% Latino, $n = 20$; 50.5% White/Caucasian, $n = 188$; 6.7% African American/Black, $n = 25$; .5% Native American, $n = 2$; 2.1% Middle Eastern, $n = 8$; 1.1% “Other/Multiracial”, $n = 4$; participants could check multiple categories; 1.1% did not respond, $n = 4$) and religious affiliations (16.1% “None”, $n = 60$; 21.5% “Other”, $n = 80$; 29.0% Catholic, $n = 108$; 27.2% Protestant, $n = 101$; 4.6% Jewish, $n = 17$; 1.6% Muslim, $n = 6$; 1.1% no response, $n = 4$).

Materials

See Tables 3-5 for descriptive statistics. In all studies, participants were asked to report on a friend who had been dating someone for at least six months but who was not yet married. In Studies 2a and 2b, participants reported their perceptions of how “normally” and “typically” their friend’s dating relationship was currently unfolding (2 items; rated from 1 = “not at all” to 7 = “very much” see Appendix J); in Study 2c participants additionally answered “How alike is your friend’s relationship to others’ relationships?” on the same scale (see Appendix K)⁹. Participants were also asked how much they approved of their friend’s relationship (4 items; e.g., “How much do you like your friend’s partner?”, responses from 1 = “not at all” to 4 = “very much”; see Appendix M) and actively supported their friend’s relationship in the month prior (8 items; e.g., “invited your friend’s partner to your home”, responses from 1 = “never” to 7 = “very frequently”; see Appendix N). Additionally, participants were asked to make a social comparison by responding to the item, “My friend’s relationship is better than ____% of others’ relationships” on a scale from 0 to 100 (see Appendix O) as a measure of perceived relationship quality. In a second portion of these studies, participants were presented with the courtship events from Study

⁹ For a list of the other measures collected in Study 2c, see Appendix L.

1 in random order and asked to re-order them to reflect a “typical” relationship progression (see Appendix P).¹⁰

Table 3

Study 2a Descriptive Statistics

	Perceived Relationship Normativity	Relationship Approval	Relationship Support	Relationship Quality Social Comparison
<i>M (SD)</i>	4.22 (1.36)	3.12 (.73)	3.60 (1.59)	51.53 (26.30)
Scale	1 - 7	1 - 4	1 - 7	0 - 100
Chronbach's α	.79	.81	.90	N/A; 1 item

Note. $n = 40$.

Table 4

Study 2b Descriptive Statistics

	Perceived Relationship Normativity	Relationship Approval	Relationship Support	Relationship Quality Social Comparison
<i>M (SD)</i>	4.67 (1.61)	3.16 (.80)	3.29 (1.59)	58.65 (24.79)
Scale	1 - 7	1 - 4	1 - 7	0 - 100
Chronbach's α	.92	.87	.90	N/A; 1 item

Note. $n = 234$.

Table 5

Study 2c Descriptive Statistics

	Perceived Relationship Normativity	Relationship Approval	Relationship Support	Relationship Quality Social Comparison
<i>M (SD)</i>	4.49 (1.43)	3.13 (.77)	3.06 (1.41)	57.29 (28.82)
Scale	1 - 7	1 - 4	1 - 7	0 - 100
Chronbach's α	.86	.86	.87	N/A; 1 item

Note. $n = 372$, except for relationship quality social comparison in which $n = 369$ due to missing data.

¹⁰ For a list of the other measures collected in Studies 2a and 2b, see Appendix Q.

Ratings of friends' traits. In Study 2c, respondents were asked to compare their friend to all those individuals of the same age and to rate their friend on a variety of individual-level traits: positive traits (e.g., “kind”; $\alpha = .83$), negative traits (e.g., “close-minded”; $\alpha = .73$), and ‘average’ traits (e.g., “normal”; $\alpha = .73$; all traits rated from 1 = “My friend is less like this than others” to 3 = “My friend is average on this trait” to 5 = “My friend is more like this than others;” traits adapted from Hughes & Beer, 2012; 2013; see Appendix R). It was hypothesized that, on average, participants will rate their friends more highly on positive traits than negative or typical traits, indicating that network members do not think their friends are *average people* (but may want them to have *average relationships*).

Results

Participants’ approval for their friends’ relationships and support towards their friends’ relationships were each first separately regressed onto participants’ perceived normativity of their friend’s relationship development. The extent to which participants perceived their friends’ relationships as developing normatively predicted participants’ ratings of perceived relationship quality (Study 2a, $b = 9.20$, $SE = 2.75$, $t(38) = 3.35$, $p = .002$; Study 2b, $b = 10.51$, $SE = .74$, $t(233) = 14.27$, $p < .0001$; Study 2c, $b = 8.27$, $SE = .96$, $t(368) = 8.58$, $p < .0001$). The extent to which participants perceived their friends’ relationships as developing normatively predicted participants’ approval of friends’ relationships (Study 2a, $b = .35$, $SE = .07$, $t(38) = 5.31$, $p < .0001$; Study 2b, $b = .34$, $SE = .02$, $t(232) = 14.64$, $p < .001$; Study 2c, $b = .28$, $SE = .02$, $t(370) = 11.50$, $p < .0001$) and behavioral support for those relationships (Study 2a, $b = .62$, $SE = .16$, $t(38) = 3.86$, $p < .0001$; Study 2b, $b = .48$, $SE = .06$, $t(232) = 8.43$, $p < .001$; Study 2c, $b = .35$, $SE = .05$, $t(370) = 7.28$, $p < .0001$).

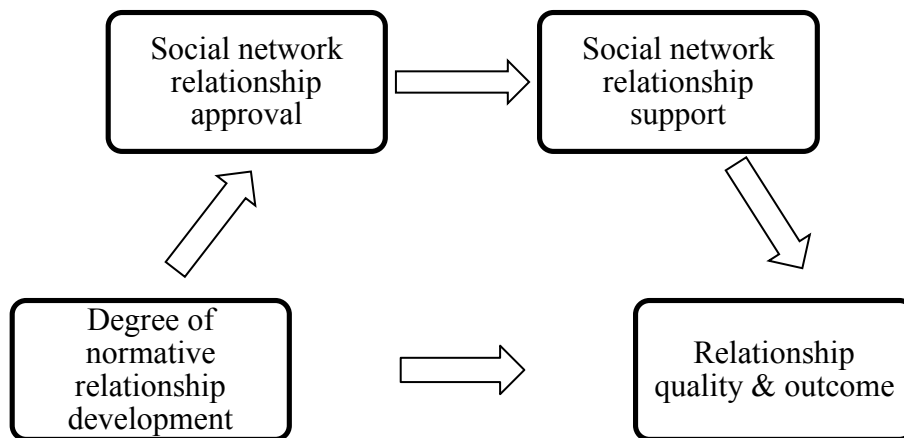
Relationship approval (Study 2a, $b = 26.05$, $SE = 4.00$, $t(39) = 6.52$, $p < .0001$; Study 2b, $b = 23.27$, $SE = 1.35$, $t(233) = 17.19$, $p < .0001$; Study 2c, $b = .28$, $SE = .02$, $t(371) = 11.50$, $p < .0001$) and relationship support (Study 2a, $b = 6.60$, $SE = 2.46$, $t(39) = 2.69$, $p = .01$; Study 2b, $b = 7.59$, $SE = .89$, $t(233) = 8.51$, $p < .0001$; Study 2c, $b = .35$, $SE = .05$, $t(371) = 7.28$, $p < .0001$) were each associated with perceived relationship quality. Further, when relationship approval was accounted for (Study 2a, $b = 25.93$, $SE = 5.34$, $t(39) = 4.85$, $p < .0001$; Study 2b, $b = 16.44$, $SE = 1.77$, $t(233) = 9.30$, $p < .0001$; Study 2c, $b = 24.12$, $SE = 1.64$, $t(368) = 14.69$, $p < .0001$), the effect of perceived normativity of the friend's relationship on perceived relationship quality was reduced (Study 2a, $b = .10$, $SE = 2.87$, $t(39) = .04$, $p = .97$; *Sobel test* = 2.76, $SE = 86.58$, $p = .006$; Study 2b, $b = 4.88$, $SE = .87$, $t(233) = 5.58$, $p < .001$; *Sobel test* = 7.79, $SE = 22.16$, $p < .0001$; Study 2c, $b = 1.50$, $SE = .89$, $t(368) = 1.68$, $p = .09$; *Sobel test* = 7.41, $SE = 26.90$, $p < .001$). Accounting for relationship support (Study 2a, $b = 3.36$, $SE = 2.76$, $t(39) = 1.22$, $p = .23$; Study 2b, $b = 3.19$, $SE = .83$, $t(233) = 3.85$, $p < .0001$; Study 2c, $b = 4.35$, $SE = 1.02$, $t(368) = 4.26$, $p < .0001$) did not reduce the effect of perceived normativity on relationship quality in Study 2a ($b = 7.12$, $SE = 3.22$, $t(39) = 2.21$, $p = .03$; *Sobel test* = 1.11, $SE = 20.00$, $p = .27$) but did reduce the effect in the two larger samples (Study 2b: $b = 8.98$, $SE = .82$, $t(233) = 10.98$, $p < .0001$; *Sobel test* = 3.72, $SE = 9.01$, $p < .001$; Study 2c: $b = 6.74$, $SE = 1.01$, $t(368) = 6.68$, $p < .0001$; *Sobel test* = 3.81, $SE = 9.44$, $p < .001$). Thus, perceptions of relationship normativity influence friends' assessments of how well a couple's relationship is unfolding. Critically, there is empirical evidence that social network relationship approval and relationship support account for this association.

Given the evidence for statistical mediation of social network *approval* and slightly less conclusive evidence for statistical mediation of social network *support* of the effect of perceived relationship normativity on perceived relationship quality, a path model was

tested on the data from Study 2c (using PROCESS for SPSS; Hayes, 2013) to determine whether social network relationship approval might affect perceived relationship quality *through* social network relationship support (see Figure 3). This path model explained more variance ($R^2 = .62$) than a mediational model with only social network approval in it ($R^2 = .48$), and 95% 1000 bootstrap sample confidence intervals on this latter model provided evidence for the role of the indirect effect ([.0820, .8250]).

Figure 3

Proposed Path Model



Note. Proposed model for the mediation of social network approval and relationship support on the effect of perceiving a more normative relationship development on subsequent relationship quality (i.e., satisfaction and/or commitment).

Perceived normative relationship progression. In the second portion of these studies, the order in which participants reported relationship events typically occur (see

Table 6 and Figure 4) closely matched the average order of events in the married sample. The only difference was that the exchanging of “I love you”s occurred, on average, prior to meeting one another’s parents. Thus, people have fairly firm beliefs about what constitutes the normative order of relationship events during dating relationship development.

Table 6

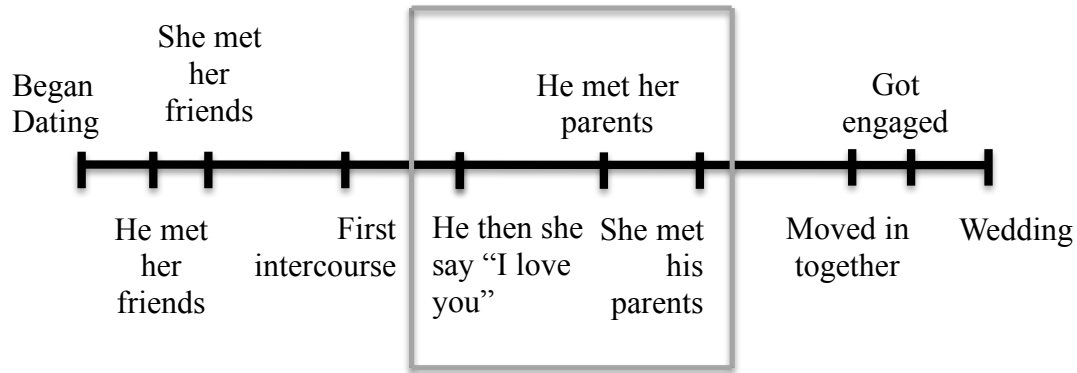
Studies 2a-c Perceived Typical Relationship Progression

Relationship Events	Study 2a <i>M (SD)</i>	Study 2b <i>M (SD)</i>	Study 2c <i>M (SD)</i>
First kiss	1.59 (1.02)	1.54 (1.25)*	1.74 (1.28)*
He meets her friends	3.00 (1.54)*	3.50 (1.67)	2.97 (1.73)
She meets his friends	3.28 (1.54)	3.56 (1.70)	3.03 (1.67)
First sexual intercourse	4.46 (1.97)*	3.72 (2.09)	4.94 (2.23)*
She says “I love you”	5.26 (1.39)	5.13 (1.55)*	5.42 (1.62)*
He says “I love you”	5.08 (1.90)	5.45 (1.78)*	5.49 (1.62)
He meets her parents	6.95 (1.78)*	7.09 (1.52)*	6.50 (1.76)*
She meets his parents	7.03 (1.71)	7.15 (1.60)	6.79 (1.74)*
Move in together	8.54 (1.17)*	8.32 (1.57)*	8.49 (1.43)*
Get engaged/formally commit to marry	9.82 (.60)*	9.53 (1.38)*	9.62 (1.07)*

Note. *Paired-t-tests revealed $p < .01$ mean difference in order between the marked event and previous event, and 1000 bootstrap confidence intervals not including 0. Study 2b, $n = 39$ undergraduates. Study 2b, $n = 233$ MTurk workers. Study 2c, $n = 356$ undergraduates.

Figure 4

Studies 2a-2c Mean Sequence of Relationship Events



Note. Study 2b, $n = 39$ undergraduates. Study 2b, $n = 233$ MTurk workers. Study 2c, $n = 356$ undergraduates.

Rating friends' traits in Study 2c. Paired sample t-tests revealed that respondents thought their friends possessed more positive traits than 'average' or negative traits compared to other people (see Table 7). On average, participants rated their friends more highly on positive traits than negative or typical traits, indicating that network members do not think their friends are *average people*.

Table 7

Ratings of Friends' Traits in Study 2c

	Positive Traits	'Average' Traits	Negative Traits
<i>M (SD)</i>	3.66 (.72) ^{a c}	2.58 (.69) ^{a b}	2.38 (.83) ^{b c}

Note. Superscripts indicate significant paired-sample t-test mean differences ($p < .0001$ and confidence intervals not including 0) between the two subscales of traits with the same letter superscript. $n = 372$.

Discussion

Collectively, the results in Studies 2a-2c provide evidence that couples' social network members are aware of relationship development norms and those norms serve as

a metric for evaluating others' developing relationships. Further, comparisons of others' relationships to relationship development norms result in specific patterns of norm enforcement (i.e., more versus less relationship approval and support), and this support for normativity is relationship-specific (i.e., not generalized to an individual's personal traits). Studies 3a and 3b were designed to extend these findings and to test whether or not relationship approval and support from couples' social network members is not only associated with relationship development normativity, but also with perceived and actual relationship quality.

STUDY 3A

Three remaining research questions were addressed in Studies 3a and 3b. First, do *couple members* perceive greater relationship approval from social network members to the extent that couple members perceive their own relationships to have developed/be developing normatively? Second, do network members perceive couple members to be *happier* in their relationships to the extent that network members perceive those relationships as having developed more normatively? Third, do the benefits of experiencing a more normative relationship influence relationships *across relationship stages* (i.e., engagement, marriage beyond the first year)? To further bolster the findings from earlier studies, a more face-valid measure of perceived and actual relationship normativity in relation to the order of relationship events was employed in Study 3a.

Method

Participants and procedure

Married participants ($n = 330$; 52.3% female; M_{length} of marriage = 5.50 years) between the ages of 18 and 91 years old ($M = 55.94$) and unmarried participants ($n = 67$; 58.2% female) between the ages of 17 and 66 years old ($M = 35.92$) were recruited via the

High Point University Survey Research Center. Phone interviews were conducted with randomly selected North Carolina residents by trained research staff members. Respondents were first asked whether or not they were currently married and then asked a series of questions based on their marital status.

Materials

Married respondents were asked about their own weddings (see Appendix S). Researchers asked, “Thinking about the major events that occur as relationships develop (for example, first kiss, being physically intimate, meeting one another’s parents, etc.), to what extent would you say your relationship, from first meeting to dating to marriage, has developed *typically* as compared to most other people’s relationships, from 1, not at all, to 7, very much?” to assess perceived normativity of relationship development. To assess perceived approval for respondents’ relationships, researchers asked, “Prior to getting married, to what extent did friends and family approve of your relationship, from 1, not at all, to 7, very much?” Finally, to assess marital satisfaction, respondents were asked, “How satisfied are you with your marriage, from 1, not at all, to 7, very much?”

Unmarried respondents were asked about the most recent wedding they had attended (see Appendix T). Respondents were first asked to report how long ago the wedding was they had attended, which served as a measure of marriage length for the couple about which respondents were reporting. To assess perceived normativity of respondents’ network members’ relationship development, researchers asked, “Thinking about the major events that occur as relationships develop (for example, first kiss, being physically intimate, meeting one another’s parents, etc.), to what extent would you say your friend’s relationship, from first meeting to dating to marriage, has developed *typically*

as compared to most other people's relationships, from 1, not at all, to 7, very much?". To assess respondents' approval for friends' or family members' relationships, researchers asked, "Prior to getting married, to what extent did you approve of this couple's relationship, from 1, not at all, to 7, very much?" Finally, to assess respondents' perceived marital satisfaction of their friends or family members, respondents were asked, "How satisfied do you think this couple is in their marriage, from 1, not at all, to 7, very much?"

Results

For married respondents (1) perceived relationship approval from friends/family and (2) marital satisfaction were each regressed separately onto perceived relationship normativity prior to respondents' weddings. For unmarried respondents (1) approval for the relationship of the most recent wedding of a network member they had attended and (2) perceived current marital satisfaction for that couple were each regressed separately onto perceived relationship normativity prior to the marriage.

For married respondents, perceived normativity before their weddings predicted perceived relationship approval from friends/family ($b = .33, SE = .05, t(329) = 7.33, p < .0001$), controlling for marriage length ($b = .08, SE = .06, t(329) = 1.41, p = .16$) and also (in the second model) predicted current marital satisfaction ($b = .22, SE = .04, t(329) = 5.12, p < .0001$), controlling for marriage length ($b = .17, SE = .05, t(329) = 3.26, p = .001$). For unmarried respondents, perceived normativity of a network member's relationship development before the wedding predicted relationship approval for the friend's relationship ($b = .33, SE = .10, t(66) = 3.23, p = .002$), controlling for marriage length ($b = .07, SE = .11, t(66) = .58, p = .56$) and also (in the second model) predicted perceived current marital satisfaction of the friend ($b = .19, SE = .11, t(66) = 1.77, p = .08$), controlling for marriage length ($b = .13, SE = .12, t(66) = 1.16, p = .25$). These results provide

convergent evidence that relationship normativity influences [perceived] network relationship approval and [perceived] relationship quality across samples (i.e., newlyweds in Study 1 and longer-married couples in this study) and across referents (i.e., for couple members and for social network members).

In order to test whether the role of network relationship approval accounts for the association between perceived relationship normativity and perceived or actual relationship quality, [perceived] approval and [perceived] marital satisfaction were regressed together onto perceived relationship normativity, controlling for marriage length in each sample. For married respondents, when the effect of perceived network approval before the marriage was accounted for ($b = .33, SE = .05, t(329) = 6.82, p < .0001$; $b_{\text{marriage length}} = .15, SE = .05, t(329) = 2.94, p = .004$), the effect of perceived relationship normativity was not reduced ($b = .11, SE = .04, t(329) = 2.50, p = .01$; *Sobel test* = .63, $SE = .17, p = .53$). For unmarried respondents, however, when the effect of perceived network approval before the marriage was accounted for ($b = .61, SE = .11, t(66) = 5.83, p < .0001$; $b_{\text{marriage length}} = .09, SE = .09, t(66) = 1.00, p = .32$), the effect of perceived relationship normativity was reduced ($b = -.01, SE = .09, t(329) = -.16, p = .88$; *Sobel test* = 2.83, $SE = .07, p = .005$). Thus, whereas there is evidence that relationship approval is the mechanism by which network members' perceptions of relationship normativity affect their perceptions of couples' relationship quality, there are likely other mediational variables by which couple members' perceptions of normativity influence their own relationship quality.

Discussion

The results of Study 3a provide evidence that the benefits of perceiving a more normative relationship progression on later relationship satisfaction extend beyond the first

years of marriage (as observed in Study 1). Further, the effect of perceived normativity on subsequent relationship satisfaction was supported in couple members (and not just from a social network perspective per Studies 2a -2c). Finally, the fact that participants (both those in relationships and couples' social network members) could conceptualize and report 'perceived relationship normativity' with face-valid items provided validation for assessing normativity in this way in future studies.

STUDY 3B

Method

Participants

Participants in the U.S. ($N = 392$; 173 men, 183 women, 2 transgender; 34 missing gender; $M_{age} = 29.60$ years; 75% White/Caucasian) were recruited on *Amazon.com*'s Mechanical Turk forum to complete an online survey about being engaged, wedding planning, and getting married ($ns = 215$ engaged to be married in the next year; 177 married in the last year) in exchange for \$2. Almost all respondents 97.8% ($n = 350$) were born in the U.S. Participants represented a range of political beliefs (47.5% rated themselves as "extremely liberal" or "liberal"; 22.1% rated themselves as "conservative" or "extremely conservative") and a range of education levels (e.g., 24.9% had completed "some college").

Materials

Participants completed an online survey, which included a 4-item measure of perceived relationship normativity prior to their weddings (e.g., "To what extent would you say your relationship has progressed 'normally'?"; rated from 1 = "not at all" to 7 = "very much"; see Appendix U for engaged respondent items and Appendix V for married respondent items). Participants also indicated their current relationship satisfaction (5 items; e.g., "Our relationship makes me very happy."; rated from 1 = "do not agree at all"

to 9 = “agree completely”) and relationship commitment (6 items; e.g., “I want our relationship to last for a very long time”; rated from 1 = “do not agree at all” to 9 = “agree completely”; Investment Model Scale; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998; see Appendix W).¹¹

Results

Both engaged and married participants were highly satisfied with and highly committed to their relationships ($M_{\text{sat}} = 8.14, SD = 1.18; M_{\text{com}} = 8.24, SD = 1.18; n = 471$). Respondents perceived a range of levels of relationship normativity ($M_{\text{norm}} = 5.39, SD = 1.42; \text{min} = 1; \text{max} = 7$) and generally high levels of social network relationship approval ($M_{\text{app}} = 6.17, SD = 1.05$). Satisfaction and commitment were correlated ($r = .70; p < .0001$).

Greater perceived relationship normativity was associated with greater current relationship satisfaction ($b = .20, SE = .04, p = .04, n = 360$) and relationship commitment ($b = .10, SE = .03, p = .003, n = 360$). Thus, the benefits of experiencing a more normative relationship progression appear to extend across relationship stages and markers of relationship quality. Further, greater perceived relationship normativity predicted greater perceived social network approval ($b_{\text{approval}} = .24, SE = .03, p < .001, n = 360$).

In order to test whether the role of perceived network relationship approval accounts for the association between perceived relationship normativity and relationship quality (see Figure 3), both perceived approval and relationship quality (satisfaction and commitment in two, separate models) were regressed onto perceived relationship normativity. When the effect of perceived social network relationship approval was accounted for, the effect of perceived normativity on relationship satisfaction was reduced ($b_{\text{sat}} = .11, SE = .03, p = .002; \text{Sobel test} = 2.86, SE = .01, p = .004$). Further, when the effect

¹¹ For a list of all other measures collected in this study, see Appendix X.

of perceived social network relationship approval was accounted for, the effect of perceived normativity on relationship commitment was reduced ($b_{\text{sat}} = .03$, $SE = .03$, $p = .36$; *Sobel test* = 4.49, $SE = .02$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The results of Study 3b, again, provide evidence that the benefits of perceiving a more normative relationship progression on later relationship satisfaction extend to other relationship stages (i.e., engagement). Further, support was bolstered for the mediational role of [perceived] social network approval (at least partially) accounting for the association between relationship normativity and relationship quality for couple members. What remains unknown is if there are *concurrent* relationship benefits to experiencing a more normative relationship progression while dating. This research question will be tested in the next set of studies.

STUDIES 4A & 4B

In order to test whether experiencing a more normative relationship development is also associated with greater relationship quality prior to engagement or marriage relationship contexts, the timeline procedure from Study 1 was replicated in two dating samples. Additionally, assessments of perceived social network relationship approval included items regarding participants' *partners'* family and friends in addition to participants' own family and friends. Again, both undergraduates and Mechanical Turk workers were sampled in order to improve generalizability of the findings.

Method

Participants

Individuals in romantic relationships ($N_{4a} = 291$; $N_{4b} = 215$)¹³ were recruited on *Amazon.com*'s Mechanical Turk forum (Study 4a) or from an Introductory Psychology course (Study 4b)¹⁴ to complete an online survey. Participants ranged in age across the two studies ($M_{4a} = 27.72$ years old, $SD_{4a} = 16.93$); $M_{4b} = 19.11$, $SD_{4b} = 1.98$).

Procedures

All respondents were guided online through the same procedure used in Study 1 (i.e., providing dates for relationship events; see Appendix Y). Participants then reported their current relationship quality (i.e., relationship satisfaction and relationship commitment; see Appendix W; Investment Model Scale; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). Participants also provided ratings of their perceived network relationship approval (4 items; e.g., "To what degree do you think your partner's friends approve of your relationship?"; rated from 1 = "disapproves very much" to 7 = "approves very much"; see Appendix Z) and perceived network relationship support (2 items; e.g., "Overall, how much actual discouragement or encouragement do you get from others to continue to date?"; rated from 1 = "discouraged a great deal" to 7 = "encouraged a great deal"; see Appendix AA)¹⁵.

¹² An experimental manipulation unrelated to the current investigation (attachment security manipulation) was employed in Study 4b (see Appendix BB).

¹³ Final sample size reflects responses already being eliminated if respondents failed a comprehension check ($N_{4a} = 17$), took the survey multiple times from the same IP address ($N_{4a} = 22$), or did not complete any measures beyond initial demographics ($N_{4a} = 10$).

¹⁴ This sample was collected concurrently to the sample for Study 2c. Survey respondents were branched into those who were not currently in a relationship and who then completed the survey about a friend's relationship (Study 2c; $n = 376$) and those who were currently in a relationship who then completed the survey about their relationship (Study 4b; $n = 215$). Respondents could not complete both portions of the survey and, therefore, there is no overlap in these two samples.

¹⁵ For all other measures collected in Studies 4a-b, see Appendix BB.

Analytic Strategy

The average, normative order of relationship events for each sample was calculated (see Tables 8 and 9) and then each participant's individual relationship timeline was compared to the average order for each relationship event. A deviation score for the order of each event was calculated and averaged, and this score was used to predict relationship satisfaction and relationship commitment. Given the significantly smaller proportion of participants who had experienced moving in together or getting engaged in this sample, the analyses described below were also conducted on only those participants who had versus had not experienced these two relationship events. Results did not differ from those when the entire sample was included, so all events are included in the results reported below.

Results

In Study 4a, deviations from the average sequence of relationship events did not predict relationship satisfaction ($b = .02$, $SE = .17$, $t(257) = .09$, $p = .93$) or relationship commitment ($b = .19$, $SE = .18$, $t(256) = 1.06$, $p = .29$).¹⁶ Deviations from the average sequence of relationship events also did not predict perceived social network approval ($b = .02$, $SE = .03$, $t(257) = .53$, $p = .60$) or perceived social network support ($b = .0001$, $SE = .02$, $t(257) = -.01$, $p = .99$). In Study 4b, deviations from the average sequence of relationship events did not predict relationship satisfaction ($b = .01$, $SE = .14$, $t(212) = .04$, $p = .97$) or relationship commitment ($b = -.03$, $SE = .14$, $t(212) = -.25$, $p = .80$). Deviations from the average sequence of relationship events also did not predict perceived social network approval ($b = -.07$, $SE = .11$, $t(212) = -.66$, $p = .51$) or perceived social network support ($b = -.01$, $SE = .14$, $t(212) = -.08$, $p = .94$).

¹⁶ Controlling for relationship length did not change the results reported.

Table 8*Study 4a Mean Order of and Deviations from Relationship Events*

	<i>M (SD) Order of Events_n</i>	<i>M (SD) Deviations from Mean Order</i>
First kiss	2.13 (1.58) ₂₅₅	1.30 (.89)
He met her friends	3.22 (2.27) ₂₃₀	1.86 (1.30)
She met his friends	2.68 (2.03) ₂₃₀	1.65 (1.18)
First intercourse	4.41 (2.42) ₂₃₄	2.08 (1.23)
He met her parents	5.01 (2.42) ₂₁₅	1.98 (1.39)
She met his parents	5.06 (2.36) ₂₀₆	2.01 (1.24)
He said "I love you"	4.95 (1.81) ₂₂₆	1.42 (1.13)
She said "I love you"	5.12 (1.89) ₂₂₇	1.50 (1.16)
Move in together	7.88 (2.13) ₁₁₇	1.59 (1.41)
Engagement	8.01 (2.39) ₉₂	1.79 (1.57)

Note. *n* = 255 MTurk workers.

Table 9*Study 4b Mean Order of and Deviations from Relationship Events*

	<i>M (SD) Order of Events</i>	<i>M (SD) Deviations from Mean Order</i>
Began dating	3.85 (2.50)	2.01 (1.48)
First kiss	4.31 (3.15)	2.39 (2.04)
He said “I love you”	8.63 (2.99)	2.23 (1.97)
She said “I love you”	8.84 (2.93)	2.21 (1.92)
He called her “girlfriend”	5.38 (2.48)	1.96 (1.52)
She called him “boyfriend”	5.75 (2.76)	2.22 (1.64)
She met her parents	5.97 (3.51)	2.97 (1.85)
He met his parents	6.40 (4.22)	3.55 (2.56)
She met his friends	2.93 (3.32)	2.37 (2.31)
He met her friends	3.49 (3.43)	2.71 (2.09)
First fight	11.03 (3.49)	2.74 (2.14)
First spent the night together	8.67 (4.52)	3.93 (2.20)
First overnight trip	11.26 (4.19)	3.38 (2.45)
First planned future activity	9.77 (4.16)	3.39 (2.40)
First sexual intercourse	8.26 (4.42)	3.84 (2.15)
Move in together	12.35 (5.36)	4.35 (2.98)
First discussed possibility of marriage	12.47 (3.51)	2.66 (2.27)
Engagement	13.75 (5.64)	4.35 (3.44)

Note. $n = 20 - 213$ undergraduates.**Discussion**

Despite adhering to what appears to be a clear normative progression of relationship events, individuals in dating relationships did not incur positive benefits of relationship normativity on their concurrent relationship quality or on their perceived network relationship approval or support. It is possible that it is too early in dating relationships to capture effects of normative development—many individuals in these samples had not experienced some or many of the events about which they were asked. This null finding

may also mean that the global relationship events employed in previous studies, with individuals who were recruited based on them being in [serious] relationships, are not the right events to assess in dating relationships. It also may be that the process of network members observing, assessing, and behaviorally supporting relationships takes time to take place and that effects on relationship quality are simply yet to be seen. There may be other important relationship outcomes besides relationship quality that might better reflect the benefits of normativity early on in relationships. These possible explanations for the null results found in Studies 4a-b will be tested in Studies 5a-c.

STUDY 5A

Qualitative procedures will be used in Study 5a to identify the events that individuals believe occur early in relationships that ‘make or break’ them later on. Then, these events will be used in Studies 5b and 5c for participants to report when each event occurred in their previous relationships. As in Studies 1 and 4a-b, these timelines will be used to calculate sample averages and individual participants’ deviations from the order in which was average, or normative. Finally, in addition to relationship quality, several additional outcomes that are more relevant to early relationships will be tested (and are described below).

Studies 5b and 5c were designed to test whether experiencing a more normative relationship development in fledgling relationships is associated with the longevity of such new relationships. Because of the paucity of published research on what events occur in the beginning of relationships (Eastwick, Keneski, & Morgan, in prep; Eastwick, Keneski, McDonald, & Morgan, in prep), Study 5a served as a foundational pilot study that was designed to capture, qualitatively, what events individuals think happen early on in relationships that are indicative of those relationships ultimately succeeding or failing.

Study 5c is a replication of Study 5b in a non-undergraduate sample on *Amazon.com*'s Mechanical Turk.

Method

Participants and procedures

Undergraduates ($N = 41$; $M_{age} = 21.28$ years, $SD_{age} = 1.11$, 6.25% male; 100% born in the U.S.)¹⁷ were asked four open-ended questions about events that happen early on in romantic dating relationships and were required to write for at least 120 seconds in response to the prompts described below (see Appendix DD). Specifically, respondents were prompted to provide events that they would want to see if their closest friend began dating someone new that would “happen in the first two weeks of the relationship for it to be a success in the long-term (i.e., lead to a happy, healthy, long-lasting relationship)?” as well as those events that might happen that would “concern” participants and make them believe “the relationship would not last.” Counterbalanced with the set of these two questions, respondents were also asked “What happens in the first two weeks of a typical dating relationship when two people meet and/or begin to date? List any and every event or occurrence that comes to mind.” Next, if participants were currently in a romantic relationship, they were also asked, “What happened in the first two weeks of meeting and/or beginning to date your partner?” Finally, participants were asked, “Do you think that the first couple of weeks of a relationship are critical for the long-term prospects of that relationship? Why or why not?”

Results

Open-ended responses were first analyzed for frequency of specific key words. For example, providing support for the hypothesis that early relationship events are perceived

¹⁷ For a list of all other demographic measures collected in this study, see Appendix CC.

to matter greatly for future relationship quality, the vast majority of participants (72%) wrote about the first portion of a relationship being ‘critical’ for the long-term success (relative to those who wrote about the early part of a relationship not being ‘critical’). Responses were examined and coded by the author for overarching themes. In response to the item regarding events that participants would like to see happen in a friend’s relationship for it to be ultimately successful, themes included: high levels of disclosure, determining compatibility, and telling friends and family members about the relationship. In response to the item regarding events that participants would be concerned about happening in a friend’s relationship for it to be ultimately successful, themes included: not hearing from/having contact with the partner, too much contact with the partner (one person becoming ‘clingy’), cancelling plans without reason/justification, being pushy sexually, and being violent. Events mentioned within each of these sub-themes were then worded to apply as broadly as possible to individuals’ relationships (as well as to both short-term and long-term relationships) and included in Studies 5b and 5c.

STUDIES 5B & 5C

Method

Participants

Eighty-seven undergraduate students (Study 5b; 70 female; $M_{age} = 20.06$, $SD = 2.07$) and 185¹⁸ participants on *Amazon.com*’s Mechanical Turk (Study 5c; 50 men; 135 women; $M_{age} = 30.46$ years old, $SD = 8.43$) completed a one-hour study for course credit or for \$2.50, respectively. Participants in both studies were from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds (Study 5b: Hispanic-American/Latino/Chicano, $n = 37$, 42.5%; European-American/Anglo/Caucasian, $n = 28$, 32.2%; Asian-American/Asian/Pacific Islander, $n =$

¹⁸ 2 participants did not provide any relationship event dates and were not included in any analyses.

15, 17.2%; Black/African-American/Caribbean-American, $n = 6$, 6.9%; bi-racial/multiracial, $n = 1$, 1.1%; Study 5c: European-American/Anglo/Caucasian, $n = 151$, 80.7%; Black/African-American/Caribbean-American, $n = 13$, 7.0%; Asian-American/Asian/Pacific Islander, $n = 7$, 3.7%; Hispanic-American/Latino/Chicano, $n = 8$, 4.3%; bi-racial/multiracial, $n = 6$, 3.2%; Native American/American-Indian, $n = 2$, 1.1%).

Procedures

Participants reflected on both a recent or current short-term and a recent or current long-term relationship; order was counterbalanced across participants (see Appendix EE for all portions of the study described below).^{19, 20} Specifically, the instructions read:

In this study, you will be asked to reflect on a **long-term, committed romantic relationship/short-term romantic relationship (e.g., a fling, one-night-stand, or brief affair)**. If you are currently involved in a long-term/short-term romantic relationship, please think of this person now. If you are not currently involved in a long-term/short-term romantic relationship, please think of the person with whom you **most recently** had a long-term/short-term relationship.

First, participants were presented with a list of 48 relationship events (including the events from Studies 1, 4, and 5a; see Table 12). For each event that had occurred in their relationships, they were asked to provide the approximate date on which the event occurred. Participants could also write in up to five additional events if they wished²¹. The

¹⁹ Eight of the 87 participants in Study 5b were able to report on a long-term but not a short-term relationship, so only their long-term reports were retained in the analyses. Three additional participants (not included in the 87) did not follow directions or could not generate either a short-term or long-term partner and will be excluded from all analyses.

²⁰ The data from Study 5b have been previously analyzed to test a set of hypotheses not related to the current investigation (Eastwick, Keneski, McDonald, & Morgan, in prep).

²¹ These events will not be included in analyses.

instructions gave participants tips for approximating dates, and participants were given a calendar that covered the past several years for assistance. When multiple events occurred on a single day, participants reported the order in which the events occurred on that day. Second, participants were presented with a list of the events they had selected and the dates they indicated for each event, sorted from earliest to most recent. For each event, participants indicated their level of *romantic interest* in the partner on a scale from 0 (*you were completely uninterested in this person*) to 100 (*you could not be more interested in this person*).²² Finally, participants completed a set of individual difference and relationship-related measures via an online survey. Included among these measures was an indicator of whether the long-term and short-term relationships for which the participant had provided the graphical data were ongoing or had ended²³.

Measures

Participants indicated their current relationship satisfaction (5 items; e.g., “Our relationship makes me very happy.”; rated from 1 = “do not agree at all” to 9 = “agree completely”; Study 5b: $\alpha = .97$ regarding long-term relationships and .95 regarding short-term relationships; Study 5c: $\alpha = .98$ regarding long-term relationships and .95 regarding short-term relationships) and relationship commitment (4 items; e.g., “I want our relationship to last for a very long time.”; rated from 1 = “do not agree at all” to 9 = “agree completely”; Study 5b: $\alpha = .98$ regarding long-term relationships and .97 regarding short-

²² Although not included in the present analyses, participants next viewed the romantic interest data they had provided in a computer-generated graphical form, with dates plotted on the x-axis and romantic interest plotted on the y-axis (see Appendix FF). Participants were asked to inspect their graphs and ensure that they accurately represented how their level of romantic interest had changed over the course of their relationships. If participants wished, they could return to the second step in the study and edit their romantic interest values until they felt that the graph was accurate. Those potentially edited values are those that will be used in analyses.

²³ For a list of all other measures collected in Studies 5b and 5c, see Appendix GG.

term relationships; Study 5c: $\alpha = .99$ regarding long-term relationships and $.96$ regarding short-term relationships; Investment Model Scale; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998; see Appendix W). In Study 5b, individuals reported lower commitment and satisfaction in the short-term relationship about which they reported ($M_{sat} = 3.09$, $SD_{sat} = 2.24$; $M_{com} = 2.94$, $SD_{com} = 2.47$) than in the long-term relationship about which they reported ($M_{sat} = 5.38$, $SD_{sat} = 3.02$; $M_{com} = 5.46$, $SD_{com} = 3.26$; $t_{sat}(77) = 4.51$, $p < .0001$, $95\% CI [1.22, 3.16]$; $t_{com}(77) = 4.73$, $p < .0001$, $95\% CI [1.44, 3.54]$). Likewise, in Study 5c, individuals reported lower commitment and satisfaction in the short-term relationship about which they reported ($M_{sat} = 2.91$, $SD_{sat} = 2.31$; $M_{com} = 2.51$, $SD_{com} = 2.33$) than in the long-term relationship about which they reported ($M_{sat} = 6.57$, $SD_{sat} = 2.79$; $M_{com} = 7.39$, $SD_{com} = 2.65$; $t_{sat}(174) = -13.17$, $p < .0001$, $95\% CI [-4.22, -3.12]$; $t_{com}(174) = -16.74$, $p < .0001$, $95\% CI [-4.31, -5.46]$). In Study 5b, the mean of average romantic interest was 70.59 ($SD = 14.11$) with an average peak of 95.99 ($SD = 7.91$) for long-term relationships and the mean of average romantic interest was 59.43 ($SD = 19.28$) with an average peak of 86.29 ($SD = 15.41$) for short-term relationships. In Study 5c, the mean of average romantic interest was 78.24 ($SD = 14.84$) with an average peak of 97.31 ($SD = 9.53$) for long-term relationships and the mean of average romantic interest was 60.95 ($SD = 22.16$) with an average peak of 84.38 ($SD = 21.28$) for short-term relationships.

Analytic strategy

In line with the procedure for Studies 1 and 4a-b, the average, normative order of events for each relationship type—short-term and long-term relationships—was calculated (see Table 10 for Study 5b and Table 11 for Study 5c) and then each participant's individual timeline for each type of relationship was compared to the average for that type of relationship. A deviation score for the order of each event was calculated and those scores were averaged. This overall deviation score was then used to predict current relationship

quality (relationship satisfaction and relationship commitment) and three additional outcomes in contrast to the previous studies: break-up, and average and peaking romantic interest in the relationship partner over the course of the relationship.

Table 10*Study 5b Order of Events for Short-Term and Long-Term Relationships*

	<i>M (SD)_n</i> Event Order for Short- Term Relationship	Paired t-test <i>p</i> - value	<i>M (SD)_n</i> Event Order for Long- Term Relationship
first met the person	1.52 (2.08) ₇₈	*	1.31 (.81) ₈₇
first flirted	4.34 (2.16) ₇₆		3.94 (2.29) ₈₅
first spent time together one-on-one	5.72 (3.23) ₇₆		5.44 (3.29) ₈₇
first went out together in a group (e.g., a party)	5.35 (5.27) ₆₆	†	6.24 (5.07) ₈₇
you first met his/her friend(s)	6.28 (5.75) ₆₅		8.23 (7.62) ₈₀
first went on a short date (e.g., coffee/drinks)	8.56 (3.85) ₅₅		8.40 (3.40) ₇₈
he/she first met your friend(s)	7.14 (5.19) ₅₉		8.63 (7.28) ₈₀
first held hands/touched	8.33 (3.08) ₆₉		9.25 (3.32) ₈₅
first told the person you were romantically interested	9.14 (4.49) ₅₇		9.30 (4.82) ₈₃
first kiss	9.44 (3.50) ₇₂		10.48 (3.81) ₈₃
first went out on a long date (e.g., dinner, dancing, movie)	10.88 (4.56) ₄₈		11.48 (4.62) ₈₃
got engaged	N/A ₁	N/A	11.50 (9.19) ₂
first told friend(s) about the new relationship	10.35 (4.00) ₆₂	*	12.36 (5.04) ₈₃
first make-out	11.33 (3.74) ₆₉	**	13.17 (4.62) ₈₂
became exclusive (i.e., not dating other people)	13.78 (5.70) ₃₂		14.62 (5.04) ₇₉
first called him/her “boyfriend”/“girlfriend”	14.83 (7.05) ₃₀		15.85 (5.05) ₇₉
you first met his/her parent(s)	14.29 (7.27) ₂₈		15.96 (7.03) ₇₂
first told parent(s) about the new relationship	13.25 (5.79) ₂₈		16.00 (5.56) ₆₈
he/she first met your parent(s)	12.48 (5.90) ₂₁		16.54 (7.51) ₆₇
first oral sex	14.29 (5.44) ₃₁	*	20.29 (6.44) ₅₅
he/she said “I love you”	22.47 (5.50) ₁₇	**	20.97 (5.12) ₇₂
first spent the night together (i.e., one of you spent the night)	13.33 (5.52) ₄₃	***	21.08 (7.85) ₆₆
he/she was first jealous for the first time	19.70 (6.57) ₃₃		21.10 (6.61) ₅₈

Table 10 Cont.

first sexual intercourse	16.44 (6.94) ₃₂	†	21.42 (6.80) ₅₉
You were first jealous	18.48 (6.96) ₃₃	†	21.58 (6.95) ₆₂
I said “I love you”	22.82 (5.39) ₁₇	**	21.60 (4.75) ₇₀
first lied to him/her	16.96 (7.22) ₂₅	*	22.19 (7.07) ₅₂
moved in together	N/A ₀	N/A	22.40 (11.80) ₆₆
I was first annoyed with him/her	16.71 (5.30) ₄₂	***	22.45 (6.15) ₇₆
first disagreement/fight	19.13 (5.55) ₃₈	*	23.50 (5.63) ₃₅
he/she first cancelled plans without justification	17.19 (6.71) ₂₁		23.57 (7.93) ₃₀
first tried a novel activity together (i.e., something one or both of you had never done before)	18.38 (6.68) ₁₃	†	23.58 (7.22) ₄₈
first caught him/her in a lie	18.62 (7.07) ₂₆	*	23.72 (6.93) ₅₀
first planned a future activity together more than 1 month in advance (e.g., vacation, concert)	19.12 (6.70) ₁₇	**	23.95 (5.42) ₅₈
I first cancelled plans because I did not want to spend time with him/her	18.05 (7.63) ₁₉	†	24.33 (7.55) ₂₄
he/she became clingy	19.06 (5.66) ₁₇	*	24.64 (8.42) ₂₈
he/she was too pushy sexually	17.07 (7.33) ₁₅	†	24.86 (9.32) ₂₂
first took an overnight trip together	17.17 (6.40) ₆		26.68 (6.40) ₄₇
broke up	22.85 (6.71) ₃₉	**	28.00 (5.67) ₅₆
found out he/she was dating other people	19.55 (8.48) ₂₂	†	28.23 (9.30) ₂₆
he/she first tried to control me	17.60 (6.43) ₁₀	†	28.55 (6.84) ₂₀
first discussed the possibility of marriage	20.38 (9.58) ₈	†	28.71 (4.96) ₃₅
got back together	22.85 (6.71) ₈		28.88 (5.05) ₂₅
first made a major purchase together (e.g., pet, car, house, cell phone plan)	N/A ₁	N/A	29.75 (5.28) ₈
broke up for the last time	20.67 (7.85) ₄₃	***	30.36 (6.63) ₄₄
today [day of study]	21.91 (7.85) ₂₈	***	31.84 (6.04) ₇₄
told him/her I was dating other people	20.31 (8.15) ₁₆		33.82 (6.82) ₁₁
got married	N/A ₀	N/A	N/A ₀

Notes. $n = 87$ undergraduates reporting on long-term relationships and $n = 79$ of the same undergraduates reporting on short-term relationships. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .0001$.

Table 11*Study 5c Order of Events for Short-Term and Long-Term Relationships*

	<i>M (SD)_n</i> Event Order for Short-Term Relationship	Paired t-test <i>p</i> - value	<i>M (SD)_n</i> Event Order for Long- Term Relationship
first met the person	1.20 (.60) ₁₈₆		1.20 (.79) ₁₈₃
first flirted	3.52 (2.26) ₁₆₉		3.74 (2.54) ₁₈₁
first spent time together one-on-one	4.72 (2.61) ₁₇₇	*	5.55 (3.62) ₁₈₁
first went out together in a group (e.g., a party)	5.57 (4.67) ₁₁₈	**	9.04 (7.47) ₁₆₄
you first met his/her friend(s)	8.03 (6.73) ₉₂	†	12.16 (7.91) ₁₇₄
first went on a short date (e.g., coffee/drinks)	7.61 (4.03) ₁₁₉	***	8.09 (4.60) ₁₆₀
he/she first met your friend(s)	7.28 (6.29) ₈₃	**	12.83 (8.08) ₁₆₅
first held hands/touched	6.91 (2.62) ₁₅₇	***	8.23 (3.89) ₁₈₀
first told the person you were romantically interested	7.49 (4.63) ₁₂₈	***	9.44 (5.31) ₁₇₆
first kiss	8.00 (2.78) ₁₅₉		9.61 (3.88) ₁₈₀
first went out on a long date (e.g., dinner, dancing, movie)	10.50 (5.28) ₁₀₁		11.58 (5.82) ₁₇₇
got engaged	28.33 (4.80) ₆		30.45 (4.58) ₇₆
first told friend(s) about the new relationship	13.04 (4.97) ₁₀₄	†	13.91 (5.67) ₁₇₉
first make-out	9.40 (3.07) ₁₅₉	***	11.70 (4.52) ₁₇₉
became exclusive (i.e., not dating other people)	15.36 (4.77) ₄₄		16.01 (5.74) ₁₇₃
first called him/her “boyfriend”/“girlfriend”	16.00 (5.21) ₅₀	**	17.06 (5.29) ₁₇₂
you first met his/her parent(s)	14.09 (7.83) ₅₄		19.02 (8.46) ₁₆₁
first told parent(s) about the new relationship	15.91 (6.54) ₅₃	***	17.37 (6.04) ₁₇₂
he/she first met your parent(s)	15.29 (8.70) ₄₉	***	19.70 (8.00) ₁₅₈
first oral sex	12.01 (4.89) ₁₁₈	*	16.31 (6.40) ₁₇₂
he/she said “I love you”	17.80 (6.79) ₄₆	***	19.64 (5.74) ₁₇₃
first spent the night together (i.e., one of you spent the night)	12.73 (4.33) ₁₁₂	*	16.10 (6.18) ₁₇₇
he/she was first jealous for the first time	16.94 (7.47) ₃₆	***	22.92 (8.07) ₈₈
first sexual intercourse	12.45 (4.48) ₁₂₆		16.99 (6.08) ₁₇₂

Table 11 Cont.

You were first jealous	16.14 (6.95) ₅₀	**	22.66 (9.02) ₁₀₁
I said “I love you”	16.60 (6.91) ₄₃	*	19.54 (5.76) ₁₇₃
first lied to him/her	16.94 (8.87) ₃₄	**	23.34 (9.50) ₉₀
moved in together	23.56 (5.32) ₉		27.89 (5.98) ₁₁₄
I was first annoyed with him/her	14.79 (6.87) ₈₁	***	22.28 (8.33) ₁₄₀
first disagreement/fight	20.01 (6.71) ₇₄	***	25.15 (6.13) ₁₆₄
he/she first cancelled plans without justification	16.23 (8.12) ₃₀	**	26.05 (9.07) ₃₈
first tried a novel activity together (i.e., something one or both of you had never done before)	19.45 (7.26) ₃₁	**	26.03 (7.75) ₁₀₄
first caught him/her in a lie	20.29 (8.32) ₄₂	**	26.06 (6.93) ₈₆
first planned a future activity together more than 1 month in advance (e.g., vacation, concert)	18.97 (8.12) ₃₄	**	22.81 (7.06) ₇₆
I first cancelled plans because I did not want to spend time with him/her	19.03 (7.05) ₂₉		26.52 (8.23) ₂₁
he/she became clingy	17.26 (6.69) ₃₄	*	31.85 (6.60) ₂₆
he/she was too pushy sexually	17.45 (8.03) ₂₂		28.64 (10.04) ₂₂
first took an overnight trip together	22.61 (6.19) ₃₁		24.70 (6.50) ₁₄₇
broke up	20.54 (7.35) ₉₂	**	28.29 (7.02) ₅₆
found out he/she was dating other people	18.45 (8.19) ₅₁		27.86 (10.33) ₂₉
he/she first tried to control me	20.13 (6.60) ₂₄	†	29.56 (6.32) ₃₉
first discussed the possibility of marriage	22.94 (7.14) ₁₆		27.42 (5.92) ₁₃₀
got back together	23.92 (6.37) ₁₃		28.73 (8.01) ₃₃
first made a major purchase together (e.g., pet, car, house, cell phone plan)	27.11 (4.40) ₉	†	30.22 (5.08) ₁₁₃
broke up for the last time	18.61 (8.05) ₁₄₅	***	32.18 (6.22) ₃₉
today [day of study]	19.09 (8.61) ₁₈₇	***	32.67 (6.92) ₁₈₆
told him/her I was dating other people	18.97 (10.26) ₃₀		28.28 (10.86) ₁₈
got married	29.67 (6.03) ₃		32.34 (4.79) ₆₄

Note. $n = 183$ MTurkers reporting on long-term relationships and on short-term relationships. † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .0001$.

Table 12*Study 5b Descriptive Statistics*

Events	LT	ST	<i>z</i>	LT	ST	<i>t</i>	LT	ST	<i>t</i>
<i>Early Events</i>									
first met the person	100.0%	100.0%	0.00	1.3	1.5	-0.92	35.4	41.1	-1.35
first spent time together one-on-one	100.0%	96.2%	1.83	5.4	5.7	-0.56	62.4	63.6	-0.29
first went out together in a group (e.g., a party)	96.6%	84.8%	2.64**	6.2	5.3	1.13	57.6	52.6	1.08
first went on a short date (e.g., coffee/drinks)	89.7%	69.6%	3.23**	8.4	8.6	-0.26	70.3	66.4	0.87
first went on a long date (e.g., dinner, dancing, movie)	95.4%	60.8%	5.46***	11.5	10.9	0.73	78.0	74.7	0.83
first flirted	97.7%	96.2%	0.56	3.9	4.3	-1.14	54.2	59.8	-1.35
first told the person you were romantically interested	95.4%	72.2%	4.12***	9.3	9.1	0.20	77.2	76.6	0.19
<i>Sexual Behaviors</i>									
first held hands/touched	97.7%	87.3%	2.57*	9.2	8.3	1.75	74.0	70.6	0.93
first kiss	95.4%	91.1%	1.10	10.5	9.4	1.76	78.5	75.0	0.91
first make-out	94.3%	87.3%	1.55	13.2	11.3	2.65**	82.4	77.4	1.37
first oral sex	63.2%	39.2%	3.09**	20.3	14.3	4.38***	82.7	69.8	2.31*
first sexual intercourse	67.8%	40.5%	3.53***	21.4	16.4	3.32**	92.0	73.5	4.49***
first spent the night together (i.e., one of you spent the night)	75.9%	54.4%	2.90**	21.1	13.3	5.63***	86.9	76.8	2.58*
<i>Social Networks</i>									
first told friend(s) about the new relationship	95.4%	78.5%	3.28**	12.4	10.4	2.59*	78.9	69.3	2.46*
first told parent(s) about the new relationship	78.2%	35.4%	5.57***	16.0	13.3	2.18*	82.9	75.8	1.46
you first met his/her friend(s)	92.0%	82.3%	1.87	8.2	6.3	1.70	55.2	48.5	1.22
he/she first met your friend(s)	92.0%	74.7%	3.01**	8.6	7.1	1.34	59.4	52.3	1.30
you first met his/her parent(s)	82.8%	35.4%	6.22***	16.0	14.3	1.06	75.9	62.2	2.12*
he/she first met your parent(s)	77.0%	26.6%	6.50***	16.5	12.5	2.27*	78.2	66.7	1.58

Table 12 Cont.

Events	LT	ST	<i>z</i>	LT	ST	<i>t</i>	LT	ST	<i>t</i>
<i>Escalating/De-escalating Relationship</i>									
I first said "I love you"	80.5%	21.5%	7.59***	21.6	22.8	-0.93	91.7	91.4	0.07
he/she first said "I love you"	82.8%	21.5%	7.90***	21.0	22.5	-1.07	89.9	90.5	-0.12
became exclusive (i.e., not dating other people)	90.8%	40.5%	6.88***	14.6	13.8	0.76	86.7	85.5	0.32
first called him/her my "boyfriend/girlfriend"	90.8%	38.0%	7.16***	15.8	14.8	0.84	87.0	82.1	1.32
found out he/she was dating other people	29.9%	27.8%	0.29	28.2	19.5	3.36**	37.0	35.5	0.17
I told him/her I was dating other people	12.6%	20.3%	-1.33	33.8	20.3	4.51***	35.0	25.5	1.11
broke-up	64.4%	49.4%	1.95	28.0	22.8	4.04***	47.9	28.9	3.12**
got back together	28.7%	10.1%	3.00**	28.9	25.0	1.85	81.0	71.0	1.67
moved in together	5.7%	0.0%		22.4			86.3		
got engaged	2.3%	1.3%		11.5	24.0		99.0	98.0	
got married	0.0%	0.0%							
<i>Future Plans</i>									
first planned a future activity together more than 1 month in advance (e.g., vacation, concert)	66.7%	21.5%	5.84***	23.9	19.1	3.06**	88.3	80.8	1.38
first took an overnight trip together	54.0%	7.6%	6.41***	26.7	17.2	3.43**	90.2	83.0	1.20
first made a major purchase together (e.g., pet, car, house, cell phone plan)	9.2%	1.3%		29.8	14.0		90.0	0.0	
first discussed the possibility of marriage	40.2%	10.1%	4.42***	28.7	20.4	3.54***	90.9	97.5	-0.98
first tried a novel activity together (i.e., something one or both of you had never done before)	55.2%	16.5%	5.17***	23.6	18.4	2.34*	87.4	79.5	1.37

Table 12 Cont.	LT	ST	<i>z</i>	LT	ST	<i>t</i>	LT	ST	<i>t</i>
Events									
<i>Negative Events</i>									
first major disagreement/fight	87.4%	48.1%	5.45 ^{***}	23.5	19.1	3.93 ^{***}	61.9	49.1	2.46 [*]
first lied to him/her	59.8%	31.6%	3.63 ^{***}	22.2	17.0	3.02 ^{**}	58.0	52.2	0.79
first caught him/her in a lie	57.5%	32.9%	3.17 ^{**}	23.7	18.6	3.03 ^{**}	56.5	40.0	2.60 [*]
he/she was jealous for the first time	66.7%	41.8%	3.22 ^{**}	21.1	19.7	0.98	68.3	60.1	1.42
I was jealous for the first time	71.3%	41.8%	3.84 ^{***}	21.6	18.5	2.07 [*]	70.0	59.8	1.84
I was first annoyed with him/her	75.9%	53.2%	3.06 ^{**}	22.5	16.7	4.98 ^{***}	61.6	46.1	2.97 ^{**}
he/she first cancelled plans without justification	34.5%	26.6%	1.10	23.6	17.2	3.01 ^{**}	63.9	43.1	2.65 [*]
I first cancelled plans because I did not want to spend time with him/her	27.6%	24.1%	0.52	24.3	18.1	2.70 [*]	56.0	40.6	1.67
he/she was too pushy sexually	25.3%	19.0%	0.97	24.9	17.1	2.71 [*]	63.1	47.7	1.99
he/she became clingy	32.2%	21.5%	1.54	24.6	19.1	2.42 [*]	56.3	41.6	1.94
he/she first tried to control me	23.0%	12.7%	1.73	28.6	17.6	4.21 ^{***}	55.0	22.6	3.04 ^{**}
<i>Today</i>									
IF this romantic relationship <u>HAS ENDED</u> , please enter the date that you <u>BROKE UP FOR THE LAST TIME</u> :	50.6%	54.4%	-0.50	30.4	20.7	6.23 ^{***}	44.4	29.0	2.35 [*]
Please enter TODAY'S DATE (REQUIRED):	85.1%	74.7%	1.67	31.8	21.6	8.57 ^{***}	41.3	36.5	0.48

Notes. The first set of columns indicate the percentage of participants reporting that the event occurred during their current or most recent long-term (LT) and short-term (ST) relationships. The second set of columns indicate the order in which the event occurred (i.e., 3 = third event) on average if the event occurred. The third set of columns indicate the level of romantic interest reported by the participant on a 0-100 scale at the event, if the event was selected. *Z* and *t* tests indicate the significance of the LT vs. ST difference within each of the sets of columns. ^{*}*p* < .05, ^{**}*p* < .01, ^{***}*p* < .001.

Study 5b Results

Deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events in short-term relationships did not predict relationship satisfaction ($b = .16$, $SE = .16$, $t(76) = 1.02$, $p = .31$) or relationship commitment ($b = -.06$, $SE = .17$, $t(76) = -.34$, $p = .74$). Likewise, deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events in long-term relationships did not predict relationship satisfaction ($b = .05$, $SE = .25$, $t(82) = .20$, $p = .84$) or relationship commitment ($b = -.07$, $SE = .27$, $t(82) = -.27$, $p = .79$)²⁴. Further, deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events did not differ as a function of whether short-term relationships were currently ongoing ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.55$) or had broken-up for the last time ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.70$; $F(76) = .76$, $p = .39$) nor whether long-term relationships were currently ongoing ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.49$) or had broken-up for the last time ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.18$; $F(85) = .43$, $p = .52$)²⁵.

Deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events did not predict the average level of romantic interest reported by participants across short-term relationships ($b = -2.11$, $SE = 1.34$, $t(76) = -1.58$, $p = .12$) but did predict average romantic interest across long-term relationships ($b = -3.58$, $SE = 1.08$, $t(76) = -3.30$, $p = .001$). Additionally, deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events predicted the peak level of romantic interest reported by participants across both short-term relationships ($b = -2.04$, $SE = 1.06$, $t(76) = -1.93$, $p = .06$) and long-term relationships ($b = -1.98$, $SE = .27$, $t(85) = -3.25$, $p < .01$).

²⁴ Neither controlling for relationship length, nor limiting relationship quality analyses to only those participants who were still with the person they reported about changed the results reported.

²⁵ Results were the same whether the relationship status variable was self-reported by participants in the survey or determined by the presence of the 'broke up for the last time' date provided.

Study 5c Results

Deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events in short-term relationships predicted relationship satisfaction ($b = .21$, $SE = .10$, $t(174) = 2.15$, $p = .03$) and relationship commitment ($b = .22$, $SE = .10$, $t(174) = 2.24$, $p = .03$). Deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events in long-term relationships, however, did not predict relationship satisfaction ($b = -.06$, $SE = .06$, $t(181) = -1.14$, $p = .26$) or relationship commitment ($b = -.03$, $SE = .05$, $t(181) = -.53$, $p = .60$)²⁶. Further, deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events did not differ as a function of whether short-term relationships were currently ongoing ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.90$) or had ended for the last time ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.38$; $F(185) = 1.87$, $p = .17$) nor whether long-term relationships were currently ongoing ($M = 5.23$, $SD = 4.13$) or had broken-up for the last time ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.44$; $F(184) = .57$, $p = .45$)²⁷.

Deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events did not predict the average level of romantic interest reported by participants across short-term relationships ($b = -.93$, $SE = 1.10$, $t(183) = -.85$, $p = .40$) but did predict average romantic interest across long-term relationships ($b = -2.25$, $SE = .70$, $t(180) = -3.23$, $p = .001$). Deviations from the mean sequence of relationship events also predicted the peak level of romantic interest reported by participants for long-term relationships ($b = -1.18$, $SE = .45$, $t(180) = -32.61$, $p = .01$), but not for short-term relationships ($b = .41$, $SE = 1.05$, $t(183) = .39$, $p = .70$).

Discussion

As in Studies 4a-c, individuals in early dating relationships did not incur a positive benefit of relationship normativity on their concurrent relationship quality (possibly for

²⁶ Neither controlling for relationship length, nor limiting relationship quality analyses to only those participants who were still with the person they reported about changed the results reported.

²⁷ Results were the same whether the relationship outcome variable was self-reported by participants in the survey or determined based on the presence of the 'broke up for the last time' date provided.

some of the same reasons discussed previously). Early relationship normativity also did not predict relationship dissolution for short- or long-term relationships. The results of Studies 5b and c, however, do provide initial evidence that the benefits of experiencing a more normative relationship development early on in dating relationships is associated with the extent to which a couple member will feel romantically interested in the dating partner across the relationship. Thus, it may be that experiencing the beginning of a relationship as it ‘should’ go provides daters with some evidence that this is a relationship partner worth investing, insofar as being more romantically interested in him/her constitutes an investment.

General Discussion

The current studies address an unanswered question in the romantic relationships literature: what do couples’ friends and family members observe about couples’ romances that brings network members to (dis)approve of those relationships? Given both pervasive social scripts that prescribe how relationships ‘should’ develop, and social network members’ vested interest in their loved ones’ relationships thriving, I hypothesized that following an average, or normative, relationship trajectory—a just right, ‘Goldilocks’ relationship progression—increases network member approval and support for the romantic relationship and, thus, positively influences couples’ relationship quality and outcomes.

In Study 1, newlyweds generated a timeline of significant courtship events by indicating when each event occurred in their histories together. Spouses whose courtship timelines progressed in a more normative sequence reported greater marital satisfaction, and this association was mediated by more positive perceived relationships with friends and family members. In Studies 2a-c, participants were asked to re-order common

courtship events (presented in random order) to reflect a “typical” relationship’s progression. This *perceived* normative order of relationship events closely matched the normative order from the Study 1 sample. Further, in Studies 2a-c and 3a, participants exhibited greater approval for a friend’s relationship to the degree that that relationship was perceived to have developed normatively. Additionally, in Study 2c, an alternative explanation for this effect—that network members want their loved ones to be average across many traits and not just in their relationship progressions—was not supported.

In Studies 3a and 3b, the associations between perceived normative relationship development, perceived network relationship approval, and relationship quality were replicated in engaged, recently-married, and long-married couples. Further, additional analyses suggested that social network relationship approval and support mediate the link between normative relationship development and subsequent relationship quality. In Studies 4a and 4b, the effect of normative relationship development on relationship quality was not replicated in dating couples, potentially indicating that it may be too early in couples’ relationships to experience the benefits of normativity on relationship satisfaction and commitment. Finally, Studies 5b and 5c (based on a qualitative pilot study, Study 5a) tested whether experiencing a more normative relationship development early on in fledgling relationships was associated with relationship quality, romantic interest, and relationship dissolution. Relationship normativity generally predicted higher peak romantic interest in both short-term and long-term relationships, but was not associated with relationship dissolution or relationship quality. Across studies, more normative relationship progressions were generally associated with greater relationship approval and support from couples’ social networks, and more average, ‘Goldilocks’ relationships thrived.

NORMATIVE RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Replicating and extending previous research on relationship scripts (Holmberg & MacKenzie, 2002), the results of the current studies (specifically, Studies 2a-c) provide evidence that individuals readily recognize and can articulate norms for the order in which relationship milestones should occur. As in previous studies in other relationship contexts (e.g., following the normative scripts for what you ‘should’ do on a first date resulting in a better quality date; Holmberg & MacKenzie, 2002), the order in which relationship milestones occur predicts better subsequent relationship outcomes (Study 1, Studies 3a and 3b, Studies 5b and 5c). In other words, there is a relationship development that is ‘just right.’

Importantly, these benefits were observed at multiple relationship stages, including when individuals first began short-term and long-term relationships (Studies 5b and 5c; peak romantic interest was higher in more normative relationships), during the engagement period (Study 3b; better concurrent relationship quality), during the newlywed period (Study 1; Study 3b; better subsequent relationship quality), and during later years of marriage (Study 3a; better subsequent relationship quality). Thus, the positive effects of experiencing a more normative relationship development are fairly pervasive across the life course of romantic relationships.

Additionally, both objective relationship development normativity (i.e., dates on which relationship events occurred; Study 1, Studies 5b and 5c) as well as *perceived* relationship development normativity (e.g., couple members’ self-reports; Studies 3a and 3b) were associated with better relationship outcomes. This convergent evidence across different types of assessments of relationship normativity supports the notion that individuals do take note (consciously or unconsciously) of the order in which relationship

events occur. How those relationship observations permeate romantic relationships to, ultimately, influence relationship quality is explored in the next section.

NETWORK MEMBERS' RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT NORM ENFORCEMENT

Relationships researchers have long known that “no couple is an island” (Felmlee, 2001) and that “relationships do not unfold in a vacuum” (Sinclair & Wright, 2009, p. 1543; Slatcher, 2010, p. 279; Sprecher, 2011, p. 630; Vangelisti, Reis, & Fitzpatrick, 2002, p. 255). That is, social network members interact with and infiltrate couples' romantic relationships in a number of ways. For example, social network relationship opinions—what loved ones think about a couple's relationship—matter greatly for relationship success (e.g., Agnew, Loving, & Drigotas, 2001; Etcheverry, Le, & Charania, 2008; Felmlee, 2001; Loving, 2006; MacDonald & Ross, 1999). What has largely been unexplored empirically, however, is exactly *how* network members come to form those relationship opinions, and how exactly the opinions influence couples' relationships. One potential path by which network members obtain relationship information, form a relationship appraisal, and demonstrate that appraisal to a couple, ultimately affecting the couple's relationship, was tested and generally supported in the current studies.

Specifically, all relationships occur within social environments that are comprised of norms for behavior. Thus, both couple members and relationship observers (i.e., social network members) notice how a couple's relationship is developing and compare those observations to socially dictated relationship scripts and norms. The outcome of this comparison contributes to relationship perceptions and, thus, relationship appraisals (i.e., network members' levels of approval; couple members' levels of relationship satisfaction). In other words, socially dictated norms serve as a guiding framework by which relationship observations are made and how those observations are evaluated (Fehr, 1988). Social

network members then act in accordance with their appraisals of a couple's relationship—they demonstrate behavioral support based on the extent to which they feel positively towards the relationship (and may do so actively—e.g., telling a friend you hate his/her partner, or passively—e.g., not asking about a friend's partner; Keneski & Loving, 2014; Sprecher, 2011; for more details on this dynamic cognitive-behavioral process, see Keneski & Loving, 2014).

To illustrate, imagine Becca's brother, Chris, watches Becca and Darren begin to date and hears them say "I love you" to one another within two weeks of meeting each another. Chris's judgment about the quality of the relationship and whether it will last is likely to be guided (in part) by what he considers 'normal' in new dating relationships. He may think, "They are moving much too fast." His appraisal of Becca and Darren's relationship is derived from his observations of their interactions within the context of what he perceives to be normal romantic relationship development (with 'normality' contributing to 'success'). Based on this perception, Chris should approve less of his sister's new relationship and, as a result, show less behavioral support for the relationship (e.g., he might be less likely to tell Becca what a great match she and Darren are, or may decide not to invite the two of them to social gatherings together). As a result, Becca will detect the lack of support from Chris for her relationship and determine that he does not approve. Becca's perceived lack of relationship support from Chris may also impact how satisfied she is in her relationship with Darren and whether or not she ultimately decides to continue the relationship.

Indeed, in the current studies, network members did report higher levels of approve for more normative relationships and higher levels of behavioral support for more normative relationships relative to less normative relationships (Studies 2a-c, 3a). Further, couple members perceived varying levels of support to the extent that they also perceived

their own relationships as developing more or less normatively (Study 3a, 3b) or to the extent that their relationship had actually developed more or less normatively compared to a sample average (Study 1). As predicted, social network approval and support mediated the association between relationship normativity and subsequent relationship quality, and it was through network support that network members' relationship approval was relayed to couple members (Study 1, Studies 2a-c, Studies 3a and 3b). Thus, there is convergent evidence that network members ascertain their relationship opinions, in part, by observing a couple's relationship development. Network members then transmit those relationship appraisals to couple members through their behaviors towards the relationship, and differences in relationship quality reflect, in part, those transmissions.

It is the fact that couple members value their network members' relationship opinions which motivates couple members to ascertain those opinions. The value that is provided to couple members by knowing what their friends and family members think of their relationships is then reflected in the effects of perceived network opinions on couples' relationships (e.g., Bryant & Conger, 1999; Etcheverry & Agnew, 2004; Felmlee, 2001; Felmlee, Sprecher, & Bassin, 1990; Parks & Adelman, 1983; Parks, Stan, & Eggert, 1983; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992). Relationship scientist Novel Glenn argues that, "given the fallibility of the judgment of persons searching for mates, the best choices are likely to be made by persons substantially influenced by friends and family members, who often can be more objective and rational about the choice than the persons themselves" (2016, para. 17).

In fact, couple members care about network members' relationship opinions to the extent that couple members shape network opinions (likely both inadvertently and sometimes purposefully) through their own relationship-related behaviors. For example, couple members relay different types of relationship-related information to different

network members (e.g., more positive relationship-related disclosures to fathers but both positive *and negative* disclosures to close friends; Keneski & Loving, 2014; Keneski, et al., in prep). Further, these relationship-related disclosures influence couple members' perceived relationship approval and predict relationship dissolution (Loving, Keneski, & Pope, in prep). Engaging in and censoring certain relationship behaviors in front of network members (i.e., kissing at a party, or waiting to be home alone to have a fight rather than disagreeing in public) are other examples of ways in which couple members shape others' relationship opinions (Keneski & Loving, 2014).

Importantly, there is some empirical evidence to suggest that couple members mold network members' relationship opinions specifically about relationship development normativity. For example, couples who meet in ways that they feel are less socially acceptable (e.g., on the Internet, at a bar) perceive less support for their relationships and tell others 'cover stories' about how they met instead of the truth (Sassler & Miller, 2015). Although the measures of relationship development normativity in the current studies are based on arguably more observable relationship characteristics (i.e., when relationship events occur), it is still possible that aspects of relationship milestones can be influenced by couple members. In fact, a supplemental analysis on the data from married respondents in Study 3a revealed that couple members reported having more expensive weddings, controlling for income level, to the extent that they perceived their relationship to have developed more normatively prior to marriage. It is possible that having a more extravagant wedding serves as a signal from couple members to others about the normativity and quality of the couple's relationship. Overall, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that couple members care greatly about network members' relationship opinions, and that network member approval and support for a relationship (whether that support is garnered purposefully or not) can influence relationship outcomes.

IMPLICATIONS

Non-normative relationships

Empirical support for the connection between relationship development normativity and social network relationship approval may extend beyond those relationships tested in the current studies. For instance, non-normative (in Western mainstream culture, that is) relationships such as same-sex relationships and age-gap relationships may be particularly pertinent relationship contexts in which the effects of relationship normativity on network approval (or lack thereof) can be seen. For example, it is possible that one reason that gay and lesbian couples perceive less network approval for their relationships (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006) is because the type of and order of relationship events that occur in a developing same-sex relationship is ‘non-normative’ in comparison to the broader population of relationships. As a result, well-meaning parents, for example, may have a hard time supporting a relationship they do not normatively ‘understand’ despite complete intended acceptance of their child and her or his partner.

In a similar vein, part of the reason couples with mixed cultural or ethnic backgrounds may have lower levels of relationship success (Popenoe, 2004) is because the relationship events that are normative to each partner may differ. For example, if one partner’s family supports not living together until marriage due to religious beliefs while the other partner’s family supports cohabiting to test a couple’s compatibility, this presents a potentially hard-to-navigate dilemma for the couple. Future research should delineate the cultural relevance of relationship norms broadly (e.g., in Ireland), specifically (within subcultures, such as certain religions), and the interaction of these norms within couples and their social networks (see Future Directions).

What other outcomes might be affected by relationship development normativity?

Diverging from social norms can greatly affect individuals' mental health (e.g., Maltseva, 2015). Therefore, it is possible that divergence from relationship norms influences couple members at the individual level and not just at the relationship level. One study provides initial support for this idea. An analysis of the relationship events data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health revealed that the extent to which the sequence of events in adolescents' romantic relationships (e.g., holding hands, saying "I love you") diverged from the order of events that those adolescents thought were 'ideal' predicted a number of negative mental health outcomes (e.g., depression; Soller, 2014).

There may be a number of other norms for families and relationships in which developmental normativity influences approval from others and subsequent outcomes. As articulated in one study, "as childless people deviate from the normative life course, they often experience disapproval and criticism from their social surroundings that produce the feelings of failure, loneliness, and depression" (McQuillan et al., 2012, p. 1). Thus, the current work may have implications for other life event trajectories, normativity, and related outcomes.

STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

In addition to several specific methodological strengths of the current work mentioned previously (e.g., both objective and subjective measures of relationship normativity, the use of a qualitative pilot study to inform subsequent quantitative studies), two additional general strengths across studies should be noted. First, the use of direct and conceptual replications to provide convergent evidence bolsters confidence in the effects described. Second, research in non-undergraduate samples enhances the generalizability of

findings. Collectively, the methods employed in the current studies are innovative, rigorous, and capture novel phenomena with replicability and generalizability.

The current studies also suffered from a few limitations. First, whereas the studies provided convergent correlational evidence for the effects described and a temporal mechanism for those effects (relationship normativity > social network approval > social network support > relationship quality), the data do not provide evidence of causality. Potential experimental manipulations, in which causality could be inferred, are described in Future Directions. Further, tests of the effects of perceived relationship normativity on relationship outcomes and network approval were conducted only in samples from the U.S. in the current studies, and it is likely that relationship norms vary greatly by culture. Future work should explore cross-cultural and subcultural differences in relationship norms and network relationship approval (see Future Directions).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

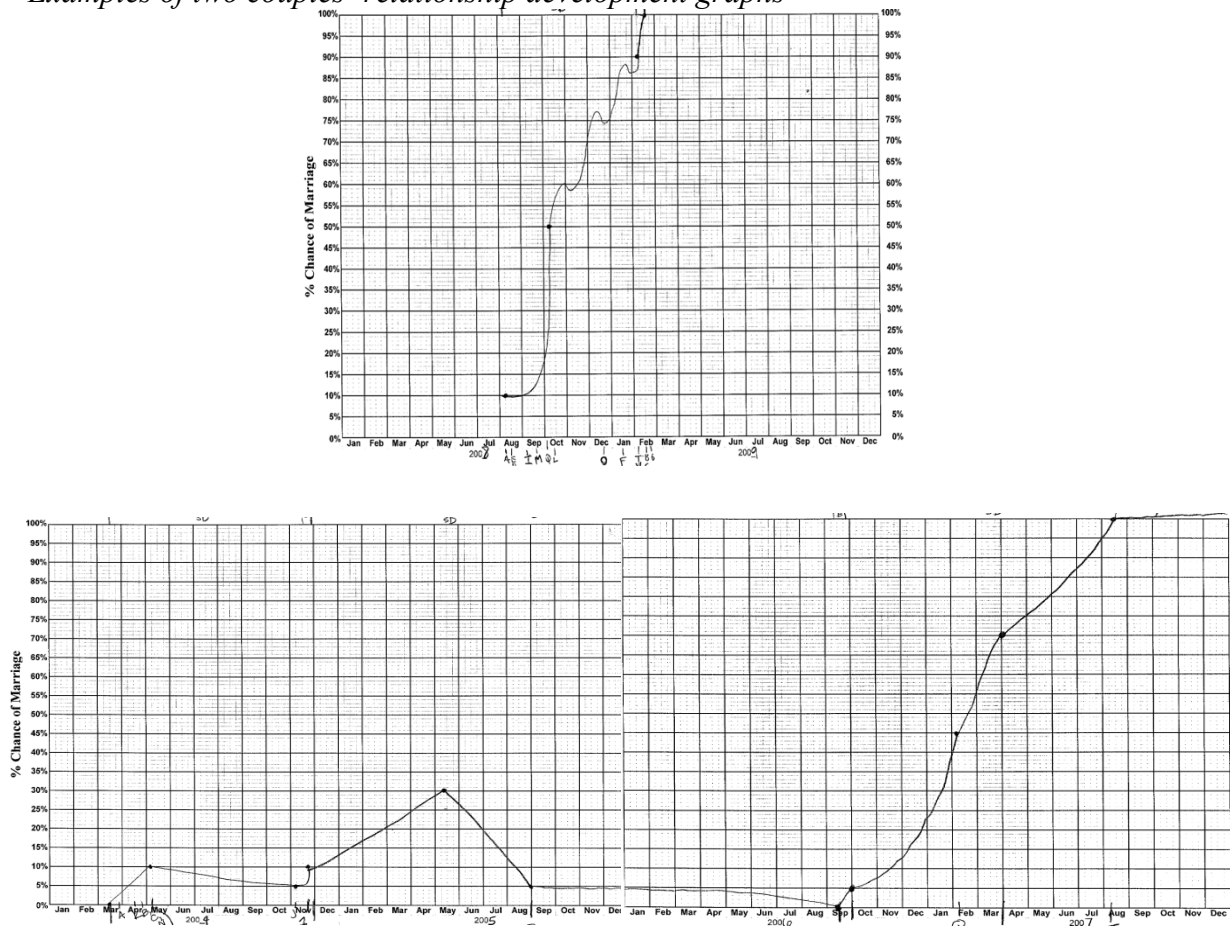
What other outcomes might be affected by relationship development normativity?

Relationship development normativity was assessed in two ways in the current studies—by calculating couples' deviation from a mean sequence of major relationship milestones and by asking couple members and network members at face value how 'normally' and 'typically' a given relationship is/has been progressing. These two measures provide sound operationalizations of both objective (timelines based on dates and deviations from average timelines) as well as subjective relationship norms. There are, however, a number of other ways in which relationship normativity could be assessed in order to test the robustness of the effects of normativity on network approval and relationship outcomes.

For example, additional data collected as a part of Study 1 could expand the timeline normativity analysis to include a more holistic assessment of relationship normativity. Specifically, the full potential of the courtship graphs as unique depictions of relationship development (see Figure 3 for two example graphs) has yet to be realized. Researchers are typically forced to employ drastic data reduction strategies (e.g., calculating overall slope; Surra, 1985) given the paucity of statistical tools available to take advantage of the nuances provided by the shape of graphical data. To maximize the utility of the data provided by these graphs, signal analysis software routinely employed by audiologists to merge multiple sound waves (MATLAB; Mathworks Inc., 2016) could potentially be used to generate a composite ‘sound wave’ of normative relationship progression. This software would also allow for the quantification of the degree to which any given graph deviates from the determined composite graph with a pattern matching algorithm, thus taking into account the entire developmental trajectory of couples’ relationships (see Figure 4).

Figure 3

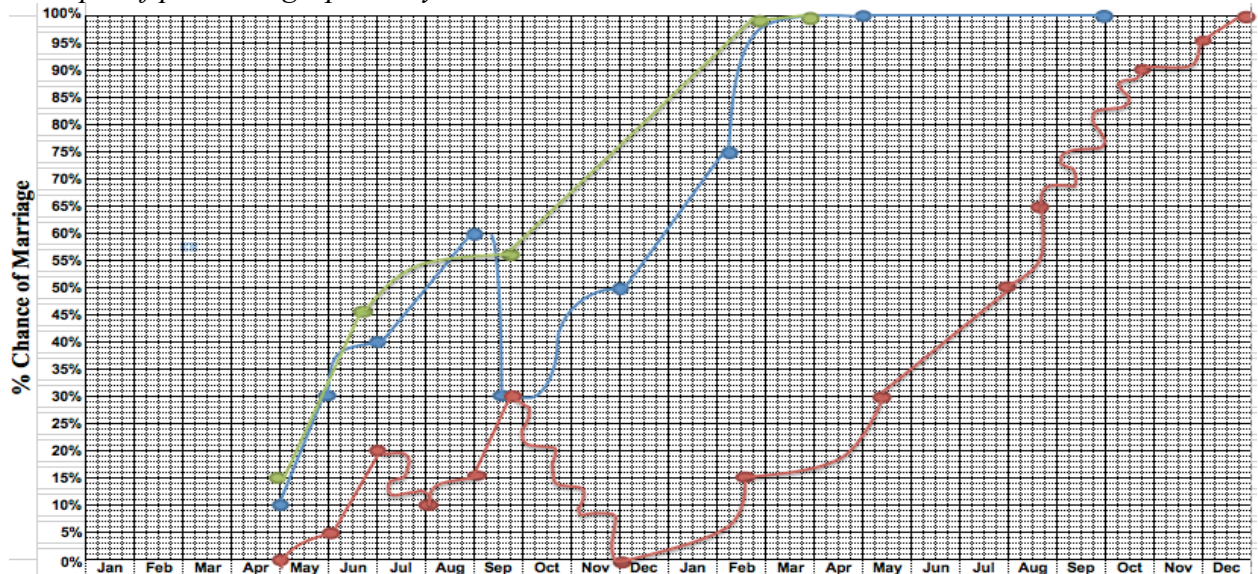
Examples of two couples' relationship development graphs



Note. The first graph (top) exemplifies a couple on a near-vertical trajectory from relationship start to marriage over a short period of time. As can be seen, this couples also provides examples of a convex parabola and a 'rocky' period of changing percent chance of marriage over certain times in their relationship. The second graph (bottom) is an example of a longer courtship, including both upturns and downturns, and a less steep progression towards marriage.

Figure 4

Example of potential graph analyses



Notes. Examples of more or less deviation from the sample's average graph are shown. The blue line represents a potential average graph as projected using MATLAB software (Mathworks Inc., 2016). The green line represents a specific couple's graph that would result in a lower overall deviation score when compared to the sample's average because its points, slope, and overall curve shape share a significant amount of similarity with the average graph. The red line, on the other hand, represents a specific couple's graph that would result in a higher overall deviation score when compared to the sample's average.

Manipulating perceived relationship normativity

Although the current studies demonstrate a correlational link between self-reported perceived normativity of a couple's developing relationship and the level of relationship approval and support for that relationship, an experimental manipulation would provide support for a *causal* link. Couple members' perceived relationship normativity could be manipulated, for instance, by having intimates provide dates for major relationship milestones and then giving false feedback about the degree to which their relationship is

progressing ‘normally’ or ‘typically.’²⁸ If couple members who received feedback that their relationship was developing less normatively then also reported lower levels of perceived relationship support, lower relationship quality, or less confidence in their relationship’s future, support for the causal influence of perceived relationship normativity on relationship outcomes would be bolstered. Couples’ social network members could be similarly presented with such false feedback about a friend or family member’s relationship in order to test whether there is support for a causal link between perceived relationship normativity and social network relationship approval.

Testing cultural and subcultural norms

Given the limitation of the current studies only testing the role of perceived relationship normativity in U.S. samples, investigations of the influence of relationship normativity in other cultures is needed. Specifically, given the many cultural differences in relationships (e.g., Doherty et al., 1994), I would hypothesize that perceived relationship normativity, and thus relationship approval, are culturally-based. For example, I suspect that a normative, average relationship development timeline for couples in rural India would look substantially different from the average timelines calculated in the current studies of Western couples. I also hypothesize that an Indian couple’s adherence, for example, to a Western relationship development timeline would *not* predict better subsequent relationship quality because of the different norms for relationship progression in India versus the U.S. Adherence to or divergence from *culturally-relevant* relationship development norms are the signals that should inform network member relationship approval because the network and couple are both embedded in the same cultural context and surrounded by the same relationship scripts.

²⁸ This would need to be done carefully—likely in the lab so that participants could be adequately debriefed—given the effect perceived relationship normativity has on relationship quality in the current studies.

Differences in a ‘normative’ relationship may emerge within subcultures of Western culture as well. For instance, I suspect that a religiously devout couple embedded in a devout church community and devout family members would not necessarily receive and perceive greater relationship support to the extent that couple followed the average relationship progression for the entire U.S. Given the stricter relationship development norms traditionally associated with devout Christian values (e.g., meeting one another’s families earlier in the relationship, waiting until marriage for sex), couples should be ‘rewarded’ for following subcultural norms for their relationship progressing in the ‘right’ way for their religious community. It may be that these subcultural relationship norms, and thus subcultural relationship approval and support, moderate perceptions of relationship normativity derived from broader Western culture.

Investigating normative versus *ideal* relationship development perceptions

Whereas the current studies centered around normativity—how relationships *typically* unfold, it may be that perceived norms for typicality in relationships are related to how individuals believe relationships ‘should’ develop. As a part of studies 2a-c, in addition to being tasked with ordering common relationship events as the events ‘typically’ progress, respondents were also asked to put the events in the ‘ideal’ order of progression as to foster a successful relationship. Supplemental analyses of data from the current studies revealed that the order in which participants said would be ideal differed substantially from the perceived normative order of events. This difference prompts an interesting question: what impact could possessing these competing beliefs (i.e., relationship norms versus relationship ideals) have on individuals in relationships who think (and whose social networks think) that their relationship is developing less than ideally? Relationship ideals should be investigated further within a framework similar to

the current studies to determine whether or not adherence to ideals also influences social network approval and couples' relationships.

CONCLUSION

Romantic relationships unfold within a broader context of social network members who have a vested interest in their loved ones' relationship happiness. But what signals do social network members receive to know a happy relationship is forthcoming for a couple? In accordance with the ubiquitous 'Goldilocks Principle'—which demonstrates that 'averageness' is beneficial across a number of scientific domains—more normative, or average, relationship development patterns are associated with better subsequent relationship quality and greater approval and support from social network members. In fact, it is the relationship approval of social network members (demonstrated by the extent to which network members behaviorally support the relationship) that accounts for the positive association between relationship normativity and relationship outcomes. Thus, adhering to norms for how a relationship typically develops is indicative of a relationship going 'just right' in the eyes of couples' social network members.

Appendices

Appendix A: Study 1 Measures, Other Measures Collected

At-Home Questionnaires

- A. Demographics
Demographics
- B. Family of Origin
Family Background Questionnaire
Snyder's Family of Origin Measure
- C. Personal History
Personal History/Relationship Timeline
Cohabitation
Experiences with Pre-marital Counseling
- D. Personality/Individual Differences
Self-Esteem
Brief Big 5 for Self
Optimism and Relationship Contingent
Self-Worth
Self-Silencing Scale
Religiosity
Eysenck Neuroticism Questionnaire
Beck Depression Inventory
- E. Marital Satisfaction
Couples' Satisfaction Index
Mid-Level Satisfaction Measure
Passionate Love Scale
Sexual Satisfaction
Expectations for future satisfaction
Constraint Commitment (Markman)
Personal Commitment (Rusbult)
Moral Commitment (Johnson)
Specific Events of Relationship
Inventory of Marital Problems
Social Support from Partner
Intimacy Scale
- F. Cognitions

RELATIONSHIP ATTRIBUTIONS MEASURE

Relationship Belief Inventory
Marital Self-Efficacy
Specific Expectations for Marriage
Social Comparison
Perceived Responsiveness Scale
Accommodation Measure
Communication Pattern Questionnaire

- G. Evaluations of Partner
Rosenberg Self-Esteem for Spouse
Brief Big 5 for Spouse
Integration and Variability Scale
Differential Importance Measure

- H. Stress
Stressful Life Events Inventory
Workload
Overall state of finances
Financial cutbacks questionnaire
Evaluation of Neighborhood
Chronic Stress
Abbreviated COPE and Rumination
Role Strain/Ego-Depletion
Social Support from friends/family
Health

Lab Session

- A. Interview about courtship/graphing task
B. Marital Issue Interactions
Pre-Interaction Appraisals
Post-Interaction Appraisals
C. In-Lab Questionnaires
Interdependence and Forgiveness
ATTACHMENT
SPECIFIC ABILITIES FOR SELF
Self-Clarity
Values for self and partner
Identity Fusion Scales
D. Support Interactions

Pre-Interaction Appraisals
Post-Interaction Appraisals

After Lab Session

- A. Daily Diaries for 14 days (daily conflict, daily relationship satisfaction, daily stress)
- Daily Cortisol Assessments (2 samples, AM and PM, for 6 days)

Note. Very similar questionnaires to those above were administered to study participants five more times at approximately six-month intervals. In-lab interactions and daily diary assessments were requested concurrently, two more times at approximately one-year intervals.

Appendix B: Study 1 Measures, Marital Satisfaction

1. Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your marriage.

Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. In general, how often do you think things between you and your partner are going well?

Never the	Rarely	Occasionally	More often than not	Most of the time	All of time
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Completely

true

3. Our marriage is strong.

4. My relationship with my partner makes me happy.

5. I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner

6. I really feel like part of a team with my partner.

Not at

all true

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Not at
all

Completely

7. How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?

8. How well does your partner meet your needs?

9. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

10. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

For each of the following items, fill in the circle (O) that best describes HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR MARRIAGE. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

INTERESTING	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	BORING
BAD	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	GOOD
FULL	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	EMPTY
STURDY	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	FRAGILE
DISCOURAGING	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	HOPEFUL
ENJOYABLE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	MISERABLE

Note. Adapted from the Couples Satisfaction Index.

Appendix C: Study 1 Measures, Perceived Network Social Support Satisfaction

1. Besides your spouse, how many people in your life can you relax and be yourself around?

No one 1 person 2 people 3 people 4 people 5 or more
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2. *How satisfied are you with this?

DISSATISFIED ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ SATISFIED

3. Besides your spouse, how many people in your life could you count on to help you if you needed it?

No one 1 person 2 people 3 people 4 people 5 or more
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

4. *How satisfied are you with this?

DISSATISFIED ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ SATISFIED

5. If you were to have a marital difficulty or personal problem, how many people do you know, other than your spouse, who you would you feel comfortable talking to about your problem?

No one 1 person 2 people 3 people 4 people 5 or more
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

6. *How satisfied are you with this?

DISSATISFIED ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ SATISFIED

7. Besides your spouse, how many people can you really count on to help you feel better when you are feeling either very upset or generally "down in the dumps"?

No one 1 person 2 people 3 people 4 people 5 or more
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

8. *How satisfied are you with this level of support?

DISSATISFIED ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ SATISFIED

Note. The four starred items were the only ones used in the current analyses.

Appendix D: Study 1 Measures, Marital Problems Inventory

All couples experience some difficulties or differences of opinion in their marriage, even if they are only very minor ones. Listed below are a number of issues that might be difficulties in your marriage. For each issue fill in a bubble to indicate how much it is a source of difficulty or disagreement for you and your spouse.

	Not a Problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Major Problem
Children	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*In-laws, parents, relatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recreation and leisure time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Household management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Showing Affection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*Friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unrealistic expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Money management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jealousy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Solving problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trust	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Independence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Drugs and alcohol	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Career decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Amount of time spent together	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Note. The two starred items were the only ones used in the current analyses.

Appendix E: Study 1 Measures, List of Relationship Events

Possible Common Events

Our Relationship Began on: _____ (Month/Day/Year)

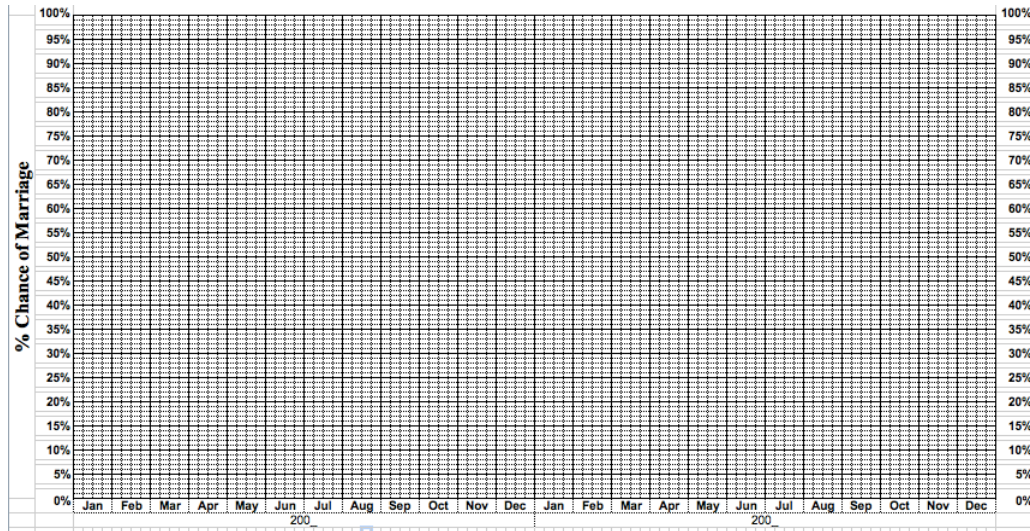
Event	Approx Date	Description
A		First kiss
B		*He first said "I love you"
C		*She first said "I love you"
D		He first referred to her as his "girlfriend" when talking to others
E		She first referred to him as her "boyfriend" when talking to others
F		*She first met his parents
G		*He first met her parents
H		*She first met his friends
I		*He first met her friends
J		First major fight
K		First spent the night together
L		First took an overnight trip together
M		First planned a future activity together more than 1 month in advance (e.g., vacation, concert)
N		*First engaged in sexual intercourse
O		Made a major or significant purchase together (e.g., house, car, pet, cell phone plan)
P		*Moved in together
Q		First talked with each other about the possibility of getting married
R		She first told someone he was "the one"
S		He first told someone she was "the one"
T		*Officially decided to get married (e.g., formal proposal, private discussion)
U		Publically announced engagement to friends

V		Publically announced engagement to family
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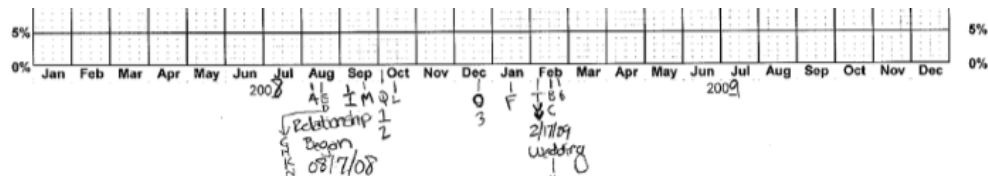
Note. The starred events were those used in the current analyses.

Appendix F: Study 1 Measures, Timeline

Blank Material:



Example Timeline:



Appendix G: Study 1 Measures, Timeline Research Assistant Script

Checklist:

- Mark date relationship began at top of Possible Common Events
- Mark date relationship began and wedding date on bottom of timeline and tape together appropriate number of graphs to represent the years of the relationship

What we're going to do now is get an idea of how your relationship has changed since the time it began. I'll be asking you questions about things that may have happened a long time ago. To help you remember we'll start by having you think of important events that have happened since your relationship began. These events can be things like holidays, birthdays, special occasions, arguments --- whatever events are important to you -- it can be anything from your first kiss to the first time you watched your favorite TV show together. Okay?

Take out possible common events.

To help you get started, we've provided a list of possible common events that can happen in relationships. You may or may not have experienced some of these events, and whether or not you experienced them is not important. What is important is that if you did experience them, you try to recall as accurately as possible when that event happened.

We've already noted the date your relationship began --- you provided this when we first talked to you about participating in the study.

Is that date correct?(if not, correct on sheet and graph)

Great. What we'd like you to do now is write the date, to the best of your knowledge, of when each event happened --- if it did at all. For example, if you started dating on March 1st, 2000 and your first kiss was on your 2nd date about two weeks later, then you might write March 15th, 2000, in the column next to "First Kiss".

While you're going through this list of 'common events' you might also think of other events that we don't have listed that are important to the two of you and the story of your relationship. Please list any other events that you can think of on this sheet labeled "Our Events". Again, please try to provide as specific a date as possible for each event.

We realize that sometimes it's hard to come up with specific dates. In those cases, just provide as much information as you can -- the month and year will suffice if you can't remember the exact date --- or feel free to guesstimate the date. It's not critical that we know the exact dates for all events; rather, we're mainly interested in getting a feel for how your relationship progressed. To help you nail down any dates that might be fuzzy, here's a copy of calendar(s) that apply to the years of your relationship.

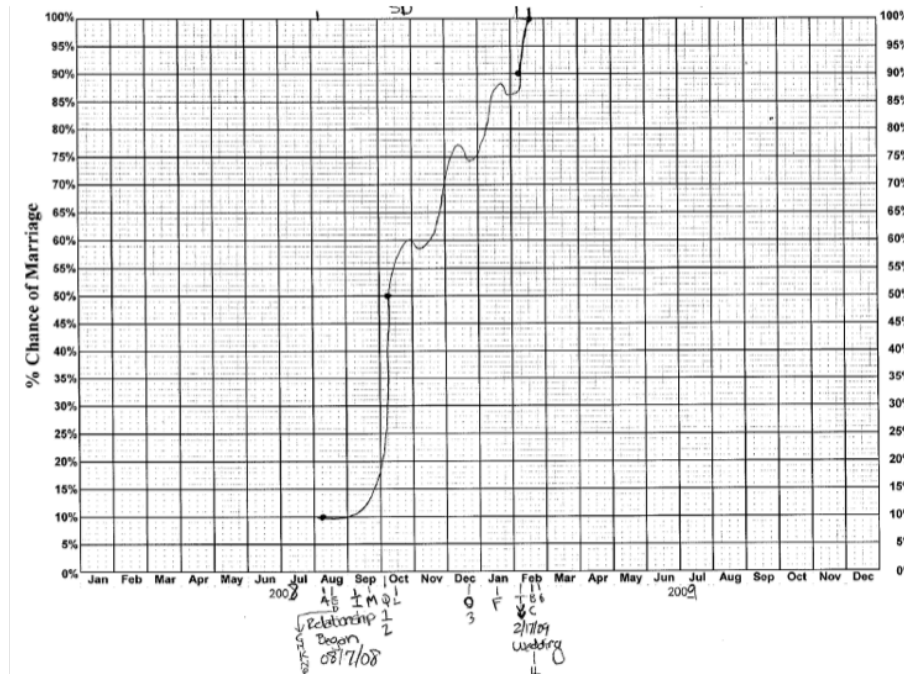
Give participants copy of calendar print outs for years applicable to relationship.

I'm going to go ahead and start by giving you 10 minutes to identify and list the important events that have happened in your relationship since it first began. Do you have any questions? If you need anything, or if you finish early, please let us know.

Return in 10 minutes.

Appendix H: Study 1 Measures, Graph

Example Graph:



Appendix I: Study 1 Measures, Graphing Research Assistant Script

Feel a little easier now to think back on what happened? Great, then we're ready for the next step. To get a more detailed image of how your relationship has changed over time we're going to ask the two of you to construct a picture of your relationship on this graph.

Take out the blank graph.

As you can see, the bottom of the graph is divided into months that will represent each month of your relationship from when it started until the date of your wedding. We've already filled in these dates for you --- are those correct?

If yes, continue. Otherwise, correct dates.

Great. Along the side of the graph is the percent chance of marriage in your relationship.

Let me give a bit more of an explanation of what I mean by percent chance of marriage.

There may have been times before you were married when you thought, with different degrees of certainty, about the possibility of marrying each other. Taking both of your past thoughts on marriage into consideration, we will graph how the chance of marriage changed over the time from when you first began your relationship until the day you were married.

I'm not talking about how much you were in love with each other, nor how much you individually wanted to marry each other. Rather, this is based on both your feelings about marriage at that time. The chance of marriage is an estimate of the two of you marrying at any point in time, all things considered.

For example, if when your relationship began, you were certain that you would never marry each other the chance of marriage would be 0%. The chance of marriage would also be 0% if you had never thought, even briefly, about the possibility of marrying each other. If, on the other hand, you were both certain that you would eventually marry, the chance of marriage when your relationship began would be 100%. The chance of marriage could also be anywhere in between 0 and 100%.

Do you have any questions for what I mean by percent chance of marriage?

Great, then I'll walk you through how you're going to make a picture of your relationship using this graph. We're going to start by marking down the events that you listed along the bottom of the graph to help you remember what happened when. You can mark the letter or number that corresponds to the event at the appropriate spot along the bottom of the graph using the approximate date you decided on for each event.

Now that we have the timeline set up, I would like you to remember back to how you felt when your relationship first began. Thinking back to how you felt when you first started dating, what would you say your percent chance of marriage was at that time?

Mark dot for percent chance of marriage at initiation.

Ok. Now, when were you first aware that the chance of marriage was...

Choose correct option:

If start is at 0%, say:

Higher than 0%?

If start is different than 0%, say:

Different from _____%, either up or down?

And what was the percent chance of marriage at that time?

Mark chance of marriage with a dot above the appropriate month. Point to the two dots at the beginning and end of the turning point (TP).

Now we will connect these two points with the proper line. Was this a gradual (increase/decrease), or were there things that caused it to change suddenly, was the line flat for a while? What should the line look like?

Draw in the appropriate line (let them describe it).

Does this line look right?

If yes: proceed to B.

If no, ask:

What is wrong with the line?

Make corrections, and then ask:

Does the line look all right now?

If yes: proceed to B.

If No: repeated the above procedure (“What is wrong with the line?”).

When all corrections are made, continue with the next section B

OK. I’ll go through one more example with you to give you time to become comfortable with the graphing, and then I will leave the two of you alone to finish the graph.

When was the next time you were aware that the chance of marriage was (higher than 0% / different from ____% either up or down)?

What was the chance of marriage at that time?

Mark chance of marriage with a dot above the appropriate month. Point to the two dots at the beginning and end of the turning point (TP).

What should the line look like that connects these two points?

Does this line look right?

Is this starting to make sense? Do you have any questions? You will keep going through these same questions until you reach your wedding day. You have 20 minutes to work on the graph, but I’ll be in to check on you periodically.

Take out joint graphing instructions.

Here’s a set of instructions for you to refer back to if you forget any of the steps.

When the couple finishes:

Great, now that we have a better picture of your relationship. I have just a few more questions to ask. I would like to divide the graph into different stages of dating that you have experienced in your relationship since your relationship began. It may be that you experienced some of the stages more than once. It may also be that you have never experienced some of the stages. Try to remember accurately which stages you experienced when.

Hand the respondent the list of stages.

Here is the list of stages. Look at the list while I describe them.

Read through list of stages with definitions.

Was there ever a time in your relationship when you were casually dating?

Please show me on the graph when this period occurred.

Mark period on top of graph above the grid.

Is there any other time when you were casually dating?

Was there ever a time in your relationship when you were seriously dating?

Please show me on the graph when this period occurred.

Mark period on top of graph above the grid.

Is there any other time when you were seriously dating?

Was there ever a time in your relationship when you were engaged?

Please show me on the graph when this period occurred.

Mark period on top of graph above the grid.

Is there any other time when you were engaged?

Was there ever a time in your relationship when you were broken up?

Please show me on the graph when this period occurred.

Mark period on top of graph above the grid.

Is there any other time when you were broken up?

Check graph for any gaps where no stage is indicated. If there are no gaps:

Thanks. That's it for the graphing procedure.

If yes there are gaps, point to first one.

I see a gap here on the graph. What would you say the stage of your relationship was at this point?

Appendix J: Study 2a and 2b Measures,
Network Perceptions of Normativity of Relationship Development

	Not at all				Very much		
To what extent would you say your friend's relationship has progressed ' <u>normally</u> '? [*]	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent would you say your friend's relationship has developed ' <u>ideally</u> '?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent would you say your friend's relationship has developed ' <u>typically</u> ' (i.e., typical of others' relationships)? [*]	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

^{*}*Note.* These two items were those included in the current analyses and were chosen (prior to analyses) because they best represent relationship 'normativity' in contrast with the third item not included in the current analyses, which best represents a distinct construct of relationship 'ideality.' Results do not differ, however, when all three items are included in analyses.

Appendix K: Study 2c Measures,
Network Reports of Relationship Normativity

	Not at all				Very much		
To what extent would you say your friend's relationship has progressed ' <u>normally</u> '? [*]	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent would you say your friend's relationship has developed <u>ideally</u> ?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what extent would you say your friend's relationship has developed <u>typically</u> (i.e., typical of others' relationships)? [*]	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How alike others' relationships is your friend's relationship? [*]	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

^{*}*Note.* These three items were those included in the current analyses and were chosen (prior to analyses) because they best represent relationship 'normativity' in contrast with the fourth item not included in the current analyses, which best represents a distinct construct of relationship 'ideality.' Results do not differ, however, when all four items are included in analyses.

Appendix L: Study 2c Measures, Other Measures Collected

Demographics

<u>Age:</u> _____	<u>Date of Birth:</u> _____ / _____ / _____	<u>Place of Birth:</u>
	Month Day Year	
0: O O	0: O O O O O O	USA? <u>Yes</u> <u>No</u>
1: O O	1: O O O O O O	
2: O O	2: O O O O O O	O O
3: O O	3: O O O O O O	
4: O O	4: O O O O O O	If not USA, please specify:
5: O O	5: O O O O O O	_____
6: O O	6: O O O O O O	
7: O O	7: O O O O O O	
8: O O	8: O O O O O O	
9: O O	9: O O O O O O	

	<u>White</u>	<u>African-American</u>	<u>Asian American</u>	<u>Hispanic/Latino</u>	<u>Other</u>
Race	O	O	O	O	O

	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	Muslim	Other	None
Religion	O	O	O	O	O	O

What is the highest degree that you have received?

<u>High School</u>	<u>Associates/Vocational</u>	<u>Bachelors</u>	<u>Master's</u>	<u>Ph.D., MD, DDS, etc</u>
O	O	O	O	o

What is your current relationship status?

In a relationship

Not in a relationship

How would you characterize your sexual orientation? (Please check all that apply.)

- € I am attracted to men.
- € I am attracted to women.

Religiosity

In general, how important are religious or spiritual beliefs in your day-to-day life?

Not at All Important ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Important

How often do you usually attend religious services?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Never | <input type="radio"/> Two or Three Times a Month |
| <input type="radio"/> Less than Once a Month | <input type="radio"/> Once a Week |
| <input type="radio"/> About Once a Month | <input type="radio"/> More than Once a Week |

When you have problems or difficulties in your work, family, or personal life, how often do you seek spiritual comfort?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ideal Relationship Events Ordering

A number of events and milestones occur as romantic relationships develop, and the order in which these events occur naturally varies across different couples. We'd like you to think about the **order** in which you think significant events or milestones in a developing relationship **should ideally occur**. Please **do not** simply consider how your own relationship or how friends' or family members' relationships developed. Please also **do not** order the events based solely on how you think most people experience them in relationships. We want to know **how you believe the ideal relationship should develop in order to foster the best possible relationship**. Please order the following events from 1 to 10 (1 being the 1st event to occur and 10th being the last). You may use each number only once.

Order	Description
	First kiss
	She first says "I love you"
	Move in together
	He first meet her parents
	He first meet her friends
	He first says "I love you"
	First engage in sexual intercourse
	She first meet his parents
	She first meet his friends
	Officially becoming engaged/committing to get married

Friendship Type

How would you characterize the friend this friend? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Close friend
- ☐ Acquaintance
- ☐ Roommate
- ☐ Coworker/classmate
- ☐ Sibling
- ☐ Cousin
- ☐ Other

Friendship Closeness

	Not at all		Very much	
To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?	1	2	3	4
How angry does this person make you feel?	1	2	3	4
How significant is this relationship in your life?	1	2	3	4

Relationship Predictions

How likely do you think it is that your friend and his/her current partner will still be together in 6 months?

_____ % chance of being together in 6 months (Choose any percentage from 0-100.)

How likely do you think it is that your friend and his/her current partner will still be together in 5 years?

_____ % chance of being together in 6 months (Choose any percentage from 0-100.)

How likely do you think it is that your friend and his/her current partner will eventually marry one another?

_____ % chance of marriage (Choose any percentage from 0-100.)

Brief Personality Inventory (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2002)

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

Disagree strongly	Disagree moderately	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree moderately	Agree strongly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I see myself as:

1. _____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.
2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome.
3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.
4. _____ Anxious, easily upset.
5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.
6. _____ Reserved, quiet.
7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.
8. _____ Disorganized, careless.
9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.
10. _____ Conventional, uncreative.

Beliefs about Pre-Marital Sex

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
I believe it is wrong to have sex before marriage.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix M: Study 2a-2c Measures,
Network Reports of Relationship Approval

	Not at all				Very much		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much do you <u>like</u> your friend's partner?							
How much do you <u>approve of your friend's</u> <u>relationship</u> with his/her partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much do you <u>support your friend's</u> <u>relationship</u> with his/her partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much do you <u>vocally protest</u> your friend's relationship with his/her partner? (reverse-coded)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix N: Study 2a-2c Measures,
Network Reports of Relationship Support

In the past month, I have...

	<i>Never</i>						<i>Very Frequently</i>
... told my friend I like his/her romantic partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
... told my friend and his/her partner that they make a nice couple.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
... told my friend I think he or she should continue the relationship.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
... had a conversation with my friend's partner.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
... invited my friend's partner over for meals or to spend time together.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
... invited my friend's partner over for holidays.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
... given my friend's partner a hug or handshake.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
... asked my friend how his/her partner was doing (i.e., asked about partner's welfare).	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Appendix O: Study 2a-2c Measure,
Friend's Relationship Social Comparison

How much better is your friend's relationship compared to other relationships?

My friend's relationship is better than _____ % of relationships. (slider scale from 0 - 100)

Appendix P: Study 2a-2c Measures,
Typical Relationship Events Ordering

Now, we'd like you to think about the **order** in which you think major events or milestones in a developing relationship ***typically occur (i.e., happen this way in most relationships)***. Please order the following events from 1 to 10 (1 being the 1st event to occur and 10th being the last). You may use each number only once.

Order	Description
	First kiss
	She first says "I love you"
	Move in together
	He first meet her parents
	He first meet her friends
	He first says "I love you"
	First engage in sexual intercourse
	She first meet his parents
	She first meet his friends
	Officially becoming engaged/committing to get married

Appendix Q: Study 2a and 2b, Other Measures Collected

Demographics

Age: Date of Birth: / / Place of Birth:

Month Day Year

0:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					0: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	USA?	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					1: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>			
2:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					2: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					3: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>			
4:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					4: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	If not USA, please specify:		
5:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					5: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>			
6:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					6: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>			
7:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					7: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>			
8:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					8: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>			
9:	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>					9: <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>			

	<u>White</u>	<u>African-American</u>	<u>Asian American</u>	<u>Hispanic/Latino</u>	<u>Other</u>
Race	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	<u>Protestant</u>	<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Jewish</u>	<u>Muslim</u>	<u>Other</u>	<u>None</u>
Religion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

<u>Educational Background</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
How many years of high school have you completed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many years of college have you completed?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How many years of school have you completed after college?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is the highest degree that you have received?

<u>High School</u>	<u>Associates/Vocational</u>	<u>Bachelors</u>	<u>Master's</u>	<u>Ph.D., MD, DDS, etc</u>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is your current relationship status? (Please circle one choice.)

Single Casually Dating Seriously Dating Engaged Married Divorced Widowed

How would you characterize your sexual orientation? (Please check all that apply.)

- € I am attracted to men.
 € I am attracted to women.

Religiosity

In general, how important are religious or spiritual beliefs in your day-to-day life?

Not at All Important ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very Important

How often do you usually attend religious services?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Never | <input type="radio"/> Two or Three Times a Month |
| <input type="radio"/> Less than Once a Month | <input type="radio"/> Once a Week |
| <input type="radio"/> About Once a Month | <input type="radio"/> More than Once a Week |

When you have problems or difficulties in your work, family, or personal life, how often do you seek spiritual comfort?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ideal Relationship Events Ordering

A number of events and milestones occur as romantic relationships develop, and the order in which these events occur naturally varies across different couples. We'd like you to think about the **order** in which you think significant events or milestones in a developing relationship **should ideally occur**. Please do not simply consider how your own relationship or how friends' or family members' relationships developed. Please also do not order the events based solely on how you think most people experience them in relationships. We want to know **how you believe the ideal relationship should develop in order to foster the best possible relationship**. Please order the following events from 1 to 10 (1 being the 1st event to occur and 10th being the last). You may use each number only once.

Order	Description
	First kiss
	She first says "I love you"
	Move in together
	He first meet her parents
	He first meet her friends
	He first says "I love you"
	First engage in sexual intercourse

	She first meet his parents
	She first meet his friends
	Officially becoming engaged/committing to get married

Friendship Closeness

	Not at all		Very much	
To what extent could you turn to this person for advice about problems?	1	2	3	4
How angry does this person make you feel?	1	2	3	4
How significant is this relationship in your life?	1	2	3	4

Relationship Predictions

How likely do you think it is that your friend and his/her current partner will still be together in 6 months?

_____ % chance of being together in 6 months (Choose any percentage from 0-100.)

How likely do you think it is that your friend and his/her current partner will eventually marry one another?

_____ % chance of marriage (Choose any percentage from 0-100.)

In general, how does your friend's relationship compare to other relationships? It is better than _____ % of other relationships.

Relationship Destiny Vs. Growth Beliefs

Please answer the following questions about what you think about relationships in general.

Strongly disagree			Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- _____ 1. Potential relationship partners are either compatible or they are not.
- _____ 2. A successful relationship is mostly a matter of finding a compatible partner right from the start.
- _____ 3. Potential relationship partners are either destined to get along or they are not.
- _____ 4. Relationships that do not start off well inevitably fail.
- _____ 5. The ideal relationship develops gradually over time.
- _____ 6. A successful relationship evolves through hard work and resolution of incompatibilities.
- _____ 7. A successful relationship is mostly a matter of learning to resolve conflicts with a partner.
- _____ 8. Challenges and obstacles in a relationship can make love even stronger.

Please answer the following questions according to how you typically feel toward romantic partners in general. Using the 7-point scale below state how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

- _____ 1. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.
- _____ 2. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.
- _____ 3. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.
- _____ 4. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.
- _____ 5. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.
- _____ 6. I worry a lot about my relationships.
- _____ 7. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.
- _____ 8. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.
- _____ 9. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.
- _____ 10. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.
- _____ 11. I do not often worry about being abandoned.
- _____ 12. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.
- _____ 13. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.
- _____ 14. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.
- _____ 15. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.
- _____ 16. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.

- _____ 17. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.
 - _____ 18. My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.
 - _____ 19. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.
 - _____ 20. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.
 - _____ 21. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.
 - _____ 22. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.
 - _____ 23. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.
 - _____ 24. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.
 - _____ 25. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.
 - _____ 26. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.
 - _____ 27. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.
 - _____ 28. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.
 - _____ 29. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.
 - _____ 30. I tell my partner just about everything.
 - _____ 31. I talk things over with my partner.
 - _____ 32. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.
 - _____ 33. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.
 - _____ 34. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.
 - _____ 35. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.
 - _____ 36. My partner really understands me and my needs.
-

Brief Personality Inventory (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2002)

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

Disagree strongly	Disagree moderately	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree moderately	Agree strongly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I see myself as:

1. _____ Extraverted, enthusiastic.
2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome.
3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.
4. _____ Anxious, easily upset.
5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.
6. _____ Reserved, quiet.
7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.
8. _____ Disorganized, careless.
9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.
10. _____ Conventional, uncreative.

Beliefs about Pre-Marital Sex

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
I believe it is wrong to have sex before marriage.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix R, Study 2c Measures, Ratings of Friend's Individual Traits

Now please think about your friend in comparison to all other people that are his or her age and rate your friend on the following traits.

In comparison to others, my friend is:

My friend is less
like this than others

My friend is average
on this trait

My friend is more
like this than others

Unique
Kind
Rude
Special
Warm
Difficult
Thoughtful
Different
Talented
Uptight
Typical
Successful
Lazy
Normal
Close-minded
Moral
Ordinary

Note. A composite of the items unique, special, different (reverse coded), typical, normal, and ordinary will be compared to a composite score on the items kind, thoughtful, warm, talented, successful, difficult (reverse coded), uptight (reverse coded), lazy (reverse coded), and close-minded (reverse coded).

Appendix S: Study 3a Measures, All phone interview items for *married* respondents

1. Thinking of your wedding (or most recent wedding), approximately how many total people were *invited* to your wedding ceremony and/or reception?

0 (or did not have a ceremony/reception)

1-20

21-50

51-100

101-200

201+

2. Thinking of your wedding (or most recent wedding), approximately how much money did you and/or others (such as your family or your spouse's family) spend on your wedding and/or reception? (This may include things like invitations, food, band, dress or tux, and venue rental fees.)

\$0-\$1000

\$1001-\$5000

\$5001-\$10,000

\$10,001-\$20,000

\$20,001-\$30,000

\$30,001-\$40,000

\$40,001-\$50,000

\$50,001+

3. How long have you been married to your current spouse?

less than 1 year

1-4 years

4-10 years

10-15 years

15-20 years

more than 20 years

4. How satisfied are you with your marriage?

1 (not at all) - 7 (very much)

5. Thinking about the major events that occur as relationships develop (for example, first kiss, being physically intimate, meeting one another's parents, etc.), to what extent would you say your relationship, from first meeting to dating to marriage, has developed typically as compared to most other people's relationships?

1 (not at all) - 7 (very much)

6. Prior to getting married, to what extent did friends and family approve of your relationship?

1 (not at all) - 7 (very much)

7. Prior to getting married, how much did you expect your life to change after you got married?
1 (not at all) - 7 (very much)

Appendix T: Study 3a Measures, All phone interview items for *unmarried* respondents

For the next set of questions, please think about the *most recent wedding you attended*. (If never attended a wedding, skip survey).

1. Approximately how many total people were at the wedding ceremony and/or reception?

- 1-20
- 21-50
- 51-100
- 101-200
- 201+

2. Approximately how much money do you think the bride and groom and/or others (such as the bride's and groom's families) spent on the wedding and/or reception? (This may include things like invitations, food, band, dress or tux, and venue rental fees.)

- \$0-\$1000
- \$1001-\$5000
- \$5001-\$10,000
- \$10,001-\$20,000
- \$20,001-\$30,000
- \$30,001-\$40,000
- \$40,001-\$50,000
- \$50,001+

3. Approximately how long has this couple now been married?

- less than 1 year
- 1-4 years
- 4-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15-20 years
- more than 20 years

4. How satisfied do you believe this couple is in their marriage?

- 1 (not at all) - 7 (very much)

5. Thinking about the major events that occur as relationships develop (for example, first kiss, being physically intimate, meeting one another's parents, etc.), to what extent has this couple's relationship, from first meeting to dating to marriage, developed *typically* as compared to most other people's relationships?

- 1 (not at all) - 7 (very much)

6. Prior to getting married, to what extent did you approve of this couple's relationship?

- 1 (not at all) - 7 (very much)

7. To what extent do you think this couple experienced getting married as a major life change or life transition?

1 (not at all) - 7 (very much)

Appendix U: Study 3b Measures, Perceived Relationship Normativity for *Engaged* Respondents

Please answer the following questions about your romantic relationship with your partner.

	Not at all			Very much			
To what extent would you say your relationship has progressed 'normally'?*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent would you say your relationship has developed typically (i.e., typical of others' relationships)?*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent would you say your relationship has developed ideally (i.e., in the best possible way)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Note.* These two items were those included in the current analyses and were chosen (prior to analyses) because they best represent relationship 'normativity' in contrast with the third item not included in the current analyses, which best represents a distinct construct of relationship 'ideality.' Results do not differ, however, when all three items are included in analyses.

Appendix V: Study 3b Measures, Perceived Relationship Normativity for *Married* Respondents

Please answer the following questions about your relationship prior to getting married.

	Not at all						Very much
To what extent would you say your relationship progressed 'normally'?*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent would you say your relationship developed typically (i.e., typical of others' relationships)?*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent would you say your relationship developed ideally (i.e., in the best possible way)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Note.* These two items were those included in the current analyses and were chosen (prior to analyses) because they best represent relationship 'normativity' in contrast with the third item not included in the current analyses, which best represents a distinct construct of relationship 'ideality.' Results do not differ, however, when all three items are included in analyses.

Appendix W: Study 3b Measures, Relationship Satisfaction & Commitment

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---|---|----------|---|---|------------|---|---|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| | Do Not Agree | | | Agree | | | Agree | | |
| | At All | | | Somewhat | | | Completely | | |
- _____ I want our relationship to last for a very long time.
- _____ I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.
- _____ I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
- _____ It is unlikely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.
- _____ I feel very attached to our relationship—very strongly linked to my partner.
- _____ I want our relationship to last forever.
- _____ I feel satisfied with our relationship.
- _____ My relationship is much better than others' relationships.
- _____ My relationship is close to ideal.
- _____ Our relationship makes me very happy.
- _____ Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

Note. The first six items assess relationship commitment and the second five items assess relationship satisfaction.

Appendix X: Study 3b, Summary of Other Measures Collected

Engaged participants

- Married previously?
- Engaged previously? If yes, how many times?
- Approximately when will you get married?
- How long engaged?
- How long do you plan to be engaged before marriage?
- How long did you date before you became engaged?
- How long did you know your partner before you became engaged?
- Are you currently living with your partner? If not, do you plan to? If yes, how long have you been living together? If yes, how long were together before you began living together? If no, do you spend nights with your partner? How many per week? When did you begin spending nights together?
- How did you become engaged?
- *Before you became engaged*, how frequently did you and your spouse discuss the possibility of getting married?
- *Before you became engaged*, how frequently did you and your spouse discuss the possibility of when or how a proposal would take place?
- *Before you became engaged*, how frequently did you and your spouse discuss the type of ring or token that might be exchanged when a proposal took place?
- *Before you became engaged*, how frequently did you and your spouse discuss the type of wedding you each wanted?
- Did you give or receive a ring when you became engaged? If no, did you exchange other tokens besides rings? If no, why? Do you plan to when you become married?
- Who was the FIRST person (or people) you told about becoming engaged/committed to wed?
- Why did you decide to be engaged for the length of time you did?
- What do you think the purpose is of being engaged? In other words, why don't people just go straight from dating to marriage?
- Are you going to have a wedding? If no, why? If no, did others want you to?
- Do you plan to say vows to one another?
- Do you plan to change your name(s) after marriage?
- Do you plan to combine finances?
- How did getting engaged change your relationship?
- How do you think getting married will change your relationship?

Proposal

- Describe your actual proposal.
- Was your proposal private or public?
- How romantic was your proposal?
- Describe your ideal proposal.
- Would your ideal proposal be private or public?

- How romantic would your ideal proposal be?
- Extent to which ideal proposal matches actual proposal?
- Who, if anyone, of your and your partner's family and friends knew about the proposal before it occurred?
- Did you ask your partner's family for approval to propose?
- Did your partner ask your family for approval to propose?
- What, if any, details or photographs of your proposal did you or your partner share on social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)?
- How satisfied are you with how your proposal occurred?

Ring(s)

- Who picked out the engagement ring?
- Who paid for the engagement ring?
- What is the value of the engagement ring?
- How satisfied are you with the engagement ring?
- Ideally, who would pick out the engagement ring?
- Ideally, who would have paid for the engagement ring?
- Ideally, what would the value of the engagement ring be?
- Extent to which ideal ring matches actual ring?

Wedding

- When did you first begin planning your wedding in the abstract? Concretely? How long were you engaged before you started planning?
- How many hours per week did you spend in planning? How much planning was done by you vs. your partner?
- Who is influencing the type of wedding you are planning?
- Who of your family members and friends who have been helpful during your wedding planning process?
- Who of your family members and friends have you had conflict with about your wedding planning process?
- Please briefly describe the most significant disagreement (even if it was minor) you and your partner had about the wedding?
- Please briefly describe the most positive experience you and your partner had while planning the wedding?
- How much time did you spend in leisure with your partner before becoming engaged and after becoming engaged?
- How satisfied are you with the wedding you are planning?
- How many people will you invited? Will it be small, medium, or large?
- How much do you anticipate the wedding will cost?
- Where will the wedding be? And at what type of venue?
- On what date do you plan to marry?
- Will you have a wedding party?
- Ideally, how many people would attend?
- Ideally, how much would your wedding budget be?
- Ideally, where would you want the wedding to take place?

- Extent to which ideal wedding matches actual wedding?

Vows

- Do you and your partner plan write your own?
- Say traditional vows?
- Include humor?
- How serious do you consider your vows?

Adapted Marital Problems Inventory on engagement

Adapted Marital Problems Inventory assessing how much the couple discussed the issues while engaged

Married participants

- First marriage?
- Engaged previously? If yes, how many times?
- Length of marriage
- How long were you engaged?
- How long did you date?
- How long did you know your spouse?
- Live together before marriage? If yes, how long? If yes, how long were you together more living together? If no, how many nights did you spend together? And when did you start spending nights together?
- How did you become engaged to your spouse?
- *Before you became engaged*, how frequently did you and your spouse discuss the possibility of getting married?
- *Before you became engaged*, how frequently did you and your spouse discuss the possibility of when or how a proposal would take place?
- *Before you became engaged*, how frequently did you and your spouse discuss the type of ring or token that might be exchanged when a proposal took place?
- *Before you became engaged*, how frequently did you and your spouse discuss the type of wedding you each wanted?
- Did you give or receive a ring when you became engaged? Became married? If no, did you exchange other tokens besides rings? If no, why?
- Who was the FIRST person (or people) you told about becoming engaged/committed to wed?
- What do you think the ideal length of time is to be engaged before getting married? Please indicate *days, weeks, months, or years*.
- Why did you decide to be engaged for the length of time you did?
- What do you think the purpose is of being engaged? In other words, why don't people just go straight from dating to marriage?
- Did you have a wedding? If no, why? If no, did others want you to?
- Did you say vows to one another?
- Did you or your partner changes your name(s) after marriage?
- Did you combine bank accounts?
- How did getting engaged change your relationship?

- How has getting married change your relationship?

Proposal

- Describe your actual proposal.
- Was your proposal private or public?
- How romantic was your proposal?
- Describe your ideal proposal.
- Would your ideal proposal be private or public?
- How romantic would your ideal proposal be?
- Extent to which ideal proposal matches actual proposal?
- Who, if anyone, of your and your partner's family and friends knew about the proposal before it occurred?
- Did you ask your partner's family for approval to propose?
- Did your partner ask your family for approval to propose?
- What, if any, details or photographs of your proposal did you or your partner share on social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)?
- How satisfied are you with how your proposal occurred?

Ring(s)

- Who picked out the engagement ring?
- Who paid for the engagement ring?
- What is the value of the engagement ring?
- How satisfied are you with the engagement ring?
- Ideally, who would pick out the engagement ring?
- Ideally, who would have paid for the engagement ring?
- Ideally, what would the value of the engagement ring be?
- Extent to which ideal ring matches actual ring?

Wedding

- When did you first begin planning your wedding in the abstract? Concretely? How long were you engaged before you started planning?
- How many hours per week did you spend in planning? How much planning was done by you vs. your partner?
- Who influenced the type of wedding you had?
- Who of your family members and friends were helpful during your wedding planning process?
- Who of your family members and friends did you have conflict with about your wedding planning process?
- Please briefly describe the most significant disagreement (even if it was minor) you and your partner had about the wedding?
- Please briefly describe the most positive experience you and your partner had while planning the wedding?
- How much time did you spend in leisure with your partner before becoming engaged, after becoming engaged, and after you got married?
- How satisfied were you with your wedding?
- How many people were invited? Was it small, medium, or large?

- How much did the wedding cost?
- Where was the wedding? And at what type of venue?
- On what date?
- Did you have a wedding party?
- Ideally, how many people would have attended?
- Ideally, how much would your wedding budget have been?
- Ideally, where would you have wanted the wedding to take place?
- Extent to which ideal wedding matches actual wedding?

Vows

- Did you and your partner write your own?
- Say traditional vows?
- Include humor?
- How serious do you consider your vows?
- How often do you think about them?

Marital Problems Inventory

Adapted Marital Problems Inventory assessing how much the couple discussed the issues while engaged

All participants

- Relationship status
- What do you think the ultimate commitment is to a relationship/partner?
- Implicit theories of relationships scale (i.e., destiny vs. growth beliefs)
- Generally speaking, what do you believe is the ideal age FOR ANYONE to "settle down" (i.e., get married, commit for a lifetime)?
- For you personally, what do you believe is the ideal age FOR YOU to "settle down" into a serious relationship (i.e., get married, commit for a lifetime)?

Demographics

- age, gender, partner's gender, born in U.S?, if not, where?, state of residence, race/ethnicity, education, religious affiliation, religiosity, political orientation
- long distance relationship at any point?
- state of wedding
- children/plans to have children?
- Two attention check items, 1 honesty item, comments on the survey

Appendix Y: Study 4a - 4b Measures, Date Entry of Dating Relationship Events

Please **approximate the date** (mm/dd/yyyy, even if the day is just an estimate) of when each of the following **events occurred in your current relationship**. If you have not experienced an event, please leave those boxes blank. Please use the year-by-year calendar at the link below to assist you in approximating these dates.

[Click here for calendar.](#)

Began dating	--/ /--
First kiss	--/ /--
He first said "I love you"	--/ /--
She first said "I love you"	--/ /--
He first referred to her as his "girlfriend" when talking to others	--/ /--
She first referred to him as her "boyfriend" when talking to others	--/ /--
She first met his parents	--/ /--
He first met her parents	--/ /--
She first met his friends	--/ /--
He first met her friends	--/ /--
First major fight	--/ /--
First spent the night together	--/ /--
First took an overnight trip together	--/ /--
First planned a future activity together more than 1 month in advance (e.g., vacation, concert)	--/ /--
First engaged in sexual intercourse	--/ /--
Moved in together	--/ /--
First talked with each other about the possibility of getting married	--/ /--
Officially became engaged to be married	--/ /--

Appendix Z: Study 4a - 4b Measures, Perceived Network Relationship Approval

	Very much <u>dis</u> approves						Very much approves
To what degree do you think <u>your family</u> approves of your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what degree do you think <u>your friends</u> approve of your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what degree do you think <u>your partner's family</u> approves of your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To what degree do you think <u>your partner's friends</u> approve of your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix AA: Study 4a - 4b Measures, Perceived Network Relationship Support

	Discouraged a great deal				Encouraged a great deal		
Overall, how much actual discouragement or encouragement do you get from others to continue to date?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall, to what degree do you think others view you as a perfect couple that should marry someday?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix BB: Study 4a - 4b Measures, Other Measures about Own Relationship

Please **answer the following questions about this person [your partner].**

How likely do you think it is that you and your current partner will still be together in 6 months?

Very Unlikely
Unlikely
Somewhat Unlikely
Undecided
Somewhat Likely
Likely
Very Likely

How likely do you think it is that you and your current partner will still be together in 5 years?

Very Unlikely
Unlikely
Somewhat Unlikely
Undecided
Somewhat Likely
Likely
Very Likely

How likely (percent chance) is it that you and your current partner will eventually marry/formally commit to one another?

My chance of marriage is: _____ % (slider scale)

Demographics

Big Five Personality Scale
Belief about Premarital Sex
Religious Affiliation
Religiosity
Length of Relationship
Categorization of Current Relationship
Exclusivity of Current Relationship
Age
DOB
Born in U.S.? If no, where?
Gender
Partner's gender
Sexual orientation
Race/ethnicity

Education
Comments on survey
Suspicion check

After the measures described above, in Study 4a, participants in relationships were randomly assigned to see one of the following two attachment primes:

Security Prime

“Please try to remember a time when you felt loved and cared for your current romantic partner. A time you spent when your partner felt very close to you, and when you felt supported and secure. Now, take a moment and try to get a visual image in your mind of your partner. What does your partner look like? What was it like being with your partner when you felt loved and cared for? You may want to remember a time like this when you were actually with your partner. What did he or she say to you to make you feel loved and cared for? What did you say in return? How did you feel when you were with your partner when you felt loved and cared for? How does it feel to think about it now?

Please write a paragraph or two about your thoughts and feelings regarding yourself in relation to your partner when you felt loved and cared for. The "next" button will appear after 90 seconds.

Neutral Prime

“Please try to remember a time when you did some mundane task with your partner, like buying products in the store, or studying in the library. Now, take a moment and try to get a visual image in your mind of your partner. What does your partner look like? What was it like being with your partner doing the mundane task? You may want to remember a time like this when you were actually with your partner. What did he or she say to you? What did you say in return? How did you feel when you were with your partner doing the mundane task? How does it feel to think about it now?

Please write a paragraph or two about your thoughts and feelings regarding yourself in relation to your partner when you were doing a mundane task. The "next" button will appear after 90 seconds.

Relationship Visibility, Adult Attachment, Dependence

- Do you have a *Facebook* account?
- Relationship Visibility Scale (e.g., “It is important to me that my Facebook friends can tell that I’m in a relationship.”)
- What is your current profile picture of on *Facebook*?
- What is your current relationship status on *Facebook*?
- ECR Scale (e.g., “I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.”)
- Dependence Scale (e.g., “Who relies more on your relationship for the fulfillment of his or her intimacy needs (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc)?” from 1 = my partner to 9 = me)

Manipulation Check

Think back to the time in your relationship that you visualized earlier. To what extent were you able to think of a time like this in your relationship?" from 1 = "I was completely unable to think of one" to 9 = "I was very much able to think of one").

Appendix CC: Study 5a Other Measures Collected

Race/Ethnicity

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

What is your current relationship status?

Sexual orientation

Religious Affiliation

In general, how important are religious or spiritual beliefs in your day-to-day life?

1 = not at all important to 9 = very important

How often do you usually attend religious services?

Never to More than once a week

When you have problems or difficulties in your work, family, or personal life how often do you seek spiritual comfort?

Never to Almost always

Appendix DD: Study 5a Measures

Block 1:

Imagine that your closest friend starts dating someone new. What would you expect to happen in the first two weeks of the relationship for it to be a success in the long-term (i.e., lead to a happy, healthy, long-lasting relationship)? In other words, for your friend's new relationship to have a chance at long-term success, are there important things that need to happen within the first couple of weeks to get it started on the right, and best, track? List any and every event or occurrence that comes to mind.

Now think about events that might happen in the first two weeks of your friend's new relationship that would concern you or make you believe the relationship would not last. List any and every event or occurrence that comes to mind.

Block 2:

Next, think of the beginning of a *typical* romantic relationship. What happens in the first two weeks of two people meeting and/or beginning to date? List any and every event or occurrence that comes to mind.

Block 3:

Think of the beginning of your current relationship or a past relationship. What happened in the first two weeks of meeting and/or beginning to date your partner? List any and every event or occurrence that comes to mind.

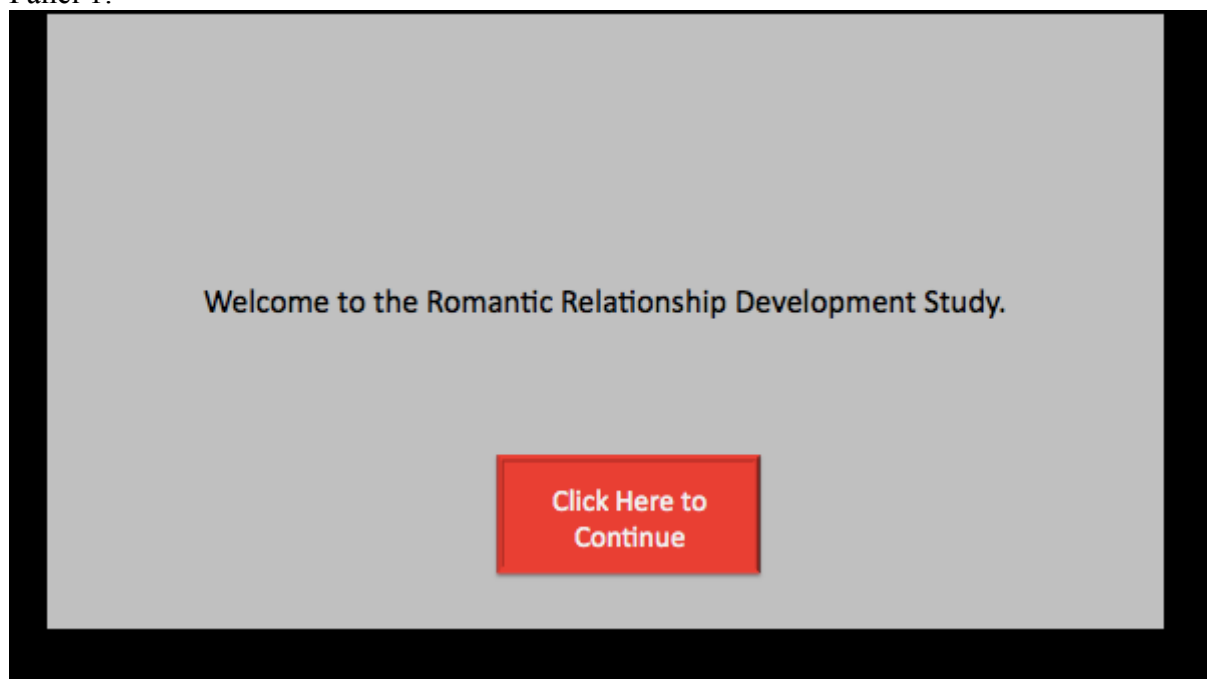
Block 4:

Do you think that the first couple of weeks of a relationship are critical for the long-term prospects of that relationship? Why or why not?

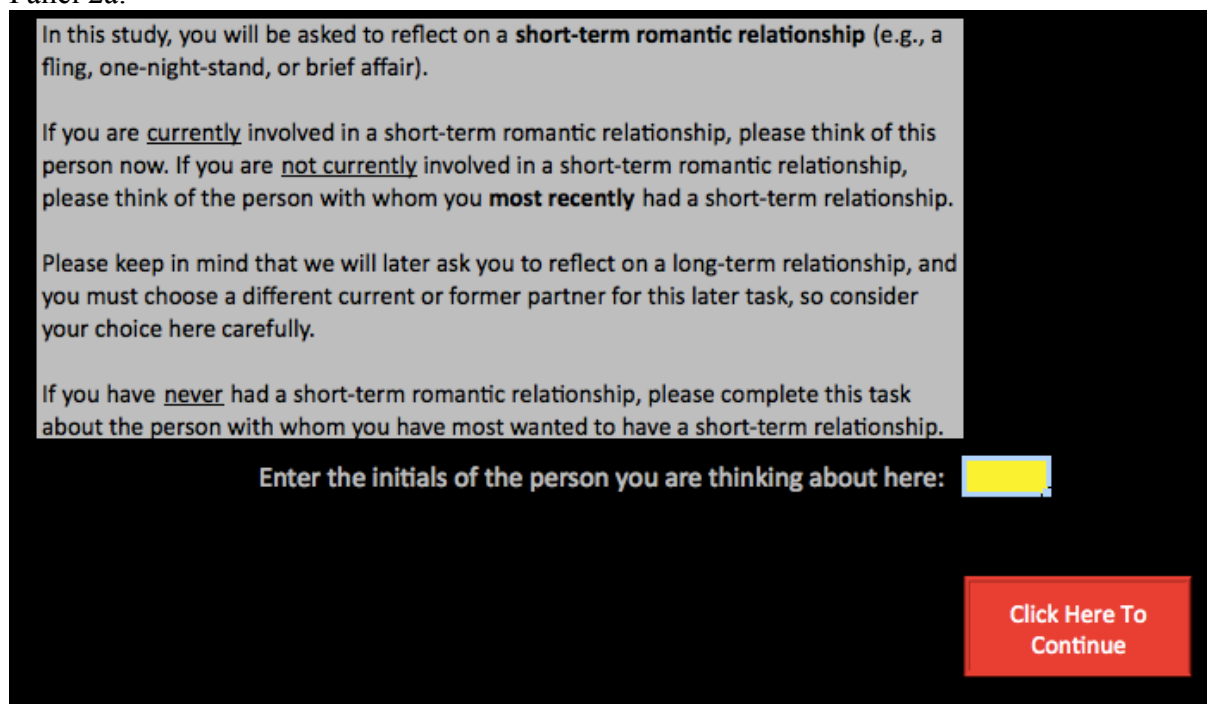
Note. Block 1 and Block 2 were presented in counterbalanced order.

Appendix EE: Studies 5b and 5c Measures,
Screenshots of each panel of the instructions and data collection

Panel 1:



Panel 2a:



Panel 2b:

In this study, you will be asked to reflect on a **long-term, committed romantic relationship**.

If you are currently involved in a long-term romantic relationship, please think of this person now. If you are not currently involved in a long-term romantic relationship, please think of the person with whom you **most recently** had a long-term relationship.

Please keep in mind that we will later ask you to reflect on a short-term relationship, and you must choose a different current or former partner for this later task, so consider your choice here carefully.

If you have never had a long-term romantic relationship, please complete this task about the person with whom you have most wanted to have a long-term relationship.

Enter the initials of the person you are thinking about here:

[Click Here To Continue](#)

Note. Panels 2a and 2b display the only difference between the short-term and long-term relationship conditions. Conditions were presented in a counterbalanced order.

Panel 3:

DATES-OF-EVENTS INSTRUCTIONS

We'd like to get an idea of how your feelings about this person have changed over time.

On the next page, we've provided a list of important events that sometimes occur over the course of romantic relationships. We'd like you to think back and try to recall when these events happened with this person. Specifically, we want you to provide the **approximate date** on which each of these events occurred by entering the month, the day, and the year into the "Approximate Date" column.

We realize that it may be difficult to pinpoint exactly when some of these events occurred, so please just do your best in approximating and giving your best guess of the dates.

Some (or even most) of the events listed may not apply to you because they may not have occurred with this person. This is fine; please just **leave the dates for those events blank**.

It is also fine if some of the events happened on the same day—just enter the same dates for all of those events. If there are events that happened with this person that you feel were significant to your relationship but are not listed, there is an **"Additional Events"** section for you to add any other events you feel are relevant along with the approximate dates on which they occurred.

HELPFUL TIPS:

We have provided a year-by-year calendar to assist at the link to the right:


It may also help to use one event as a reference point for another event. For example, if you know you went on your first date with this person on the second Friday in May, you may be able to better estimate that you had your first kiss approximately one week later.

Calendar Link

[Click Here to Continue](#)

Panel 4:

ENTER YOUR DATES HERE



	Events	Approximate Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Early Events		
	first met the person	
	first spent time together one-on-one	
	first went out together in a group (e.g., a party)	
	first went on a short date (e.g., coffee/drinks)	
	first went on a long date (e.g., dinner, dancing, movie)	
	first flirted	
	first told the person you were romantically interested	
Sexual Behaviors		
	first held hands/touched	
	first kiss	
	first make-out	
	first oral sex	
	first sexual intercourse	
	first spent the night together (i.e., one of you spent the night)	
Social Networks		
	first told friend(s) about the new relationship	
	first told parent(s) about the new relationship	
	you first met his/her friend(s)	
	he/she first met your friend(s)	
	you first met his/her parent(s)	
	he/she first met your parent(s)	
Escalating/De-escalating Relationship		
	I first said "I love you"	
	he/she first said "I love you"	
	became exclusive (i.e., not dating other people)	
	first called him/her my "boyfriend/girlfriend"	
	found out he/she was dating other people	
	I told him/her I was dating other people	
	broke-up	
	got back together	
	moved in together	
	got engaged	
	got married	
Future Plans		
	first planned a future activity together more than 1 month in advance (e.g., vacation, concert)	
	first took an overnight trip together	
	first made a major purchase together (e.g., pet, car, house, cell phone plan)	
	first discussed the possibility of marriage	
	first tried a novel activity together (i.e., something one or both of you had never done before)	
Negative Events		
	first major disagreement/fight	
	first lied to him/her	
	first caught him/her in a lie	
	he/she was jealous for the first time	
	I was jealous for the first time	
	I was first annoyed with him/her	
	he/she first cancelled plans without justification	
	I first cancelled plans because I did not want to spend time with him/her	
	he/she was too pushy sexually	

	he/she became clingy	
	he/she first tried to control me	
Today		
	IF this romantic relationship HAS ENDED , please enter the date that you BROKE UP FOR THE LAST TIME :	
	TODAY'S DATE:	11/18/15
Additional Events		

[Click Here To Continue](#)

Panel 5:

SAME DAY EVENT INSTRUCTIONS

If on the previous page you indicated that more than one event happened on the same day, on the next page we would like you to **put those events in order by time of day**. That is, we want you to indicate which event happened first on that date, which event happened second, and so on. On the next page, you'll see that the events you provided dates for will be in order by date. In the "**Order Same-Day Events**" column, please number the events that happened on the same day with a 1 for the first event that happened, a 2 for the second event on that date, and so on. **ONLY ORDER EVENTS IF THEY OCCURED ON THE SAME DAY**. Otherwise, leave the "Order Same-Day Events" column blank.

[Click Here To Continue](#)

Panel 6:

Enter a 1, 2, etc. ONLY for events that happened on the same day

When you have finished entering all the orders for SAME-DAY events, click the button below:

Events	Approximate Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Order Same-Day Events
TODAY'S DATE:	11/18/15	
first met the person		
first spent time together one-on-one		
first went out together in a group (e.g., a party)		
first went on a short date (e.g., coffee/drinks)		

[Click Here To Continue](#)

Panel 7:

ROMANTIC INTEREST INSTRUCTIONS

Now, we'd like you to think back to each of the dates on which these events occurred and rate how romantically interested you were in this person on those days.

As best you can, we want you to rate your level of romantic interest as if you could go back in time to the days on which these events occurred. For example, how romantically interested in this person were you if you think back to how you felt about him/her on the day you first met?

Please enter your ratings of romantic interest in the "Romantic Interest" Column on the next page on a scale from 0, meaning you were completely uninterested in this person, to 100, meaning you could not be more interested in this person..

Make a rating for every event date, INCLUDING the date the relationship ended (if it has ended) and FINALLY FOR "Today's date", indicating how you feel about this person today.

You should use only whole numbers (such as 0, 12, 55) and not decimals (such as 25.5).

If more than one event happened on the same day, you are welcome to make different ratings for each event on that day or the same rating for each event that happened on that day. **Do not enter a value for rows without dates.**

[Click Here To Continue](#)

Panel 8:

ENTER YOUR RATINGS HERE

Events	Approximate Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Romantic Interest (0-100)
TODAY'S DATE:		
	11/18/15	
first met the person		
first spent time together one-on-one		
first went out together in a group (e.g., a party)		
first went on a short date (e.g., coffee/drinks)		
first went on a long date (e.g., dinner, dancing, movie)		
first flirted		
first told the person you were romantically interested		
first held hands/touched		
first kiss		
first make-out		
first oral sex		
first sexual intercourse		
first spent the night together (i.e., one of you spent the night)		

[Click Here to Continue](#)

When you have finished entering all your ratings, click the button below:

Rate ALL events for which there are dates in Column E, INCLUDING and ENDING WITH Today's Date.

Appendix FF: Studies 5b and 5c Measures,
Screenshots of each panel of the instructions and data collection for graphing

Panel 9:

GRAPH INSTRUCTIONS

On the next page, you will see a graph that displays how your romantic interest has changed over time.

You'll notice that the ratings of romantic interest you made are plotted as a graph across time based on the dates you entered, which appear along the bottom.

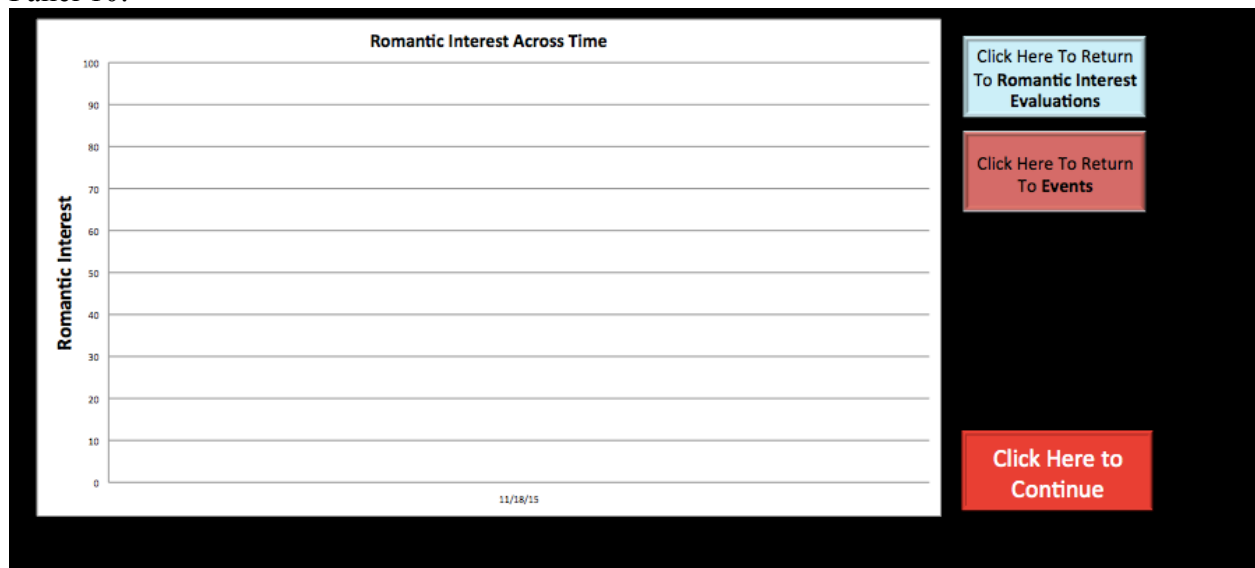
Look carefully at this graph.

Does the overall picture accurately represent how your level of romantic interest changed across time? If you see any periods of time where you feel your romantic interest was lower or higher than what is depicted, please click on the "Return To Romantic Interest Evaluations" button and change your rating(s) of romantic interest that correspond(s) with the event/point in time you feel is misrepresented. If you remember additional events you'd like to add the dates for, please click "Return to Events", add your events, and click back through the buttons to get to the graph again.

Once the graph looks correct to you, move on to the next page.

[Click Here To Continue](#)

Panel 10:



Panel 11:

PART 2 INSTRUCTIONS

For the next portion of the study , you will be asked about the extent to which you have experienced a range of strong desires concerning the relationship you are currently reflecting on.

Please read the instructions on the top of each page.

[Click Here to Continue](#)

Panel 12:

INSTRUCTIONS: People often go through a period of time during which they experience **strong sexual desire** for another person. That is, you might strongly desire some form of sexual contact (e.g., kissing, making-out, and other sexual contact) with him/her, and/or you might have frequent sexual fantasies about him/her.

Please review the events/times below, and think about whether or not you experienced strong sexual desire for the person you have been reporting about during those events/times. If you did experience strong sexual desire for this person during those events/times, place an "X" in the "Strong Sexual Desire" column. If you did not experience strong sexual desire during that event/time, just leave the "Strong Sexual Desire" column blank.

Events	Approximate Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Strong Sexual Desire?
TODAY'S DATE:		
	11/18/15	
first met the person		
first spent time together one-on-one		
first went out together in a group (e.g., a party)		
first went on a short date (e.g., coffee/drinks)		
first went on a long date (e.g., dinner, dancing, movie)		
first flirted		
first told the person you were romantically interested		

ENTER YOUR Xs HERE

When you have finished entering all your ratings, click the button below:

[Click Here to Continue](#)

Note. Panels 13-21 were identical to Panel 12, except for the motivation that was defined and for which participants were directed to indicate whether or not they experienced. Those motivations were as follows: sexual desire (shown above), desire to care, psychological attachment, desire to make a favorable impression, desire to carefully evaluate, desire to self-protect, desire to compete, desire to self-promote, desire to self-disclose, and desire to be self-disclosed to.

Appendix GG: Studies 5b and 5c, Summary of Other Measures Collected in Surveys

About the Short-Term Relationship

- Are you still involved with this relationship?
- How did you know this person before the relationship began?
- How did you meet this person?
- Relationship Commitment
- Relationship Satisfaction
- Relationship Investment
- Quality of Relationship Alternatives
- Attachment Affiliation w/ this person

About the Long-Term Relationship

- Are you still involved with this relationship?
- Did you meet this person online?
- Relationship Commitment
- Relationship Satisfaction
- Relationship Investment
- Quality of Relationship Alternatives
- Attachment Affiliation w/ this person

Individual Differences

- Adult Attachment—Experiences in Close Relationships Scale, Short Version
- Sociosexuality

Demographics

- Current relationship status
 - If involved, how long? If involved, how long did you know partner before beginning the relationship?
- Gender
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Race/ethnicity
- Comments about the study

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